THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PASTORAL SERVANT LEADERSHIP AND
CONGREGATIONAL SPIRITUAL FORMATION IN U. S. CHURCHES

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Education
by
Rich J. Sironen

Liberty University, Lynchburg, VA
2020
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APPROVED BY:

Brian Pinzer, Ph.D., Dissertation Supervisor

Mary E. Lowe, Ed.D., Second Reader
ABSTRACT

The purpose of this correlational study was to determine if a relationship exists between pastoral servant leadership and congregational spiritual formation in Protestant churches located in the United States of America. The context of this study was to assess possible relationships between pastoral servant leadership and congregational spiritual formation. The population of churches used for this study was comprised of Protestant churches located within the United States of America. The methodological research design for this study was a quantitative non-exploratory correlational approach, which is used to "describe and measure the degree of association (or relationship) between two or more variables or sets of scores" (Creswell, 2018, p. 50). The primary independent variable was pastoral servant leadership behavior as derived from the Self-Assessment of Servant Leadership (SASL) survey. The primary dependent variable was the spiritual formation of congregational members as derived from the Faith Maturity Scale (FMS) survey. The data analysis for this study was Spearman’s rho Correlation. This statistical procedure is a nonparametric measure that is typically used to quantify the association between two ordinal variables. The results of the analysis yielded a significant positive correlation between pastoral servant leadership and congregational spiritual formation.

Keywords: servant leadership, leadership theories, spiritual formation
Dedication

This work is dedicated to my wife, Shawn, and three children Joseph, Naomi, and Richard who supported me throughout a lifetime of education.
Acknowledgments

First, I would like to thank and praise my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ who gave His all for me so I can do all things through Him and for His glory.

Second, I would like to thank my wife, Shawn who is my soul mate and support in all things.

Finally, I would like to thank my Pastor and Father-in-law Reverend Russell Penn, Jr. who continues to provide hope and inspiration through his life, preaching, and leadership.
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List of Abbreviations

English Standard Version (ESV)

Faith Maturity Scale (FMS)

Self-Assessment of Servant Leadership (SASL)

Self-Assessment of Servant Leadership Profile (SASLP)

Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS)
CHAPTER ONE: RESEARCH CONCERN

Introduction

Effective church leadership is critical to the spiritual formation of the members and the effectiveness of the church in reaching the local community. In the fourth chapter of Ephesians, the Apostle Paul describes the God-ordained ministry leadership positions followed by their purpose as being the spiritual formation of the church and its members. Contemporary leadership models based on authentic, charismatic, transactional, or transformational styles possess strengths, but their inherent weaknesses inevitably fail to provide the necessary leadership required for spiritual growth. Therefore, a clear gap exists between the predominant leadership theories and the requirement for sustained results in the life of the Christian.

One of the most popular current models of leadership is servant leadership, which claims to be built upon the concept that the leader functions best when he or she is serving the best interests of those whom they lead. Many Christian organizations have adopted servant leadership on the assumption that it is based upon the life of Christ. Several studies have examined servant leadership in Christian settings (Anderson, 2015; Belser, 2001; Crabtree, 2014; Heinz, 2017; Myung, 2014). However, the extent of pastoral servant leadership either directly or indirectly affecting spiritual formation remains unclear (McEachin, 2011). A proper understanding and application of biblical servant leadership are required if Christian leaders are to shepherd God's people in a way that is commensurate with the example of Scripture.

While there exists a large base of research concerning leadership and congregational spiritual formation, the relationship between the two is relatively unexamined. Therefore, this researcher proposes to take a closer look at pastoral servant leadership behavior and explore potential relationships with congregational spiritual formation. In presenting this study between
pastoral servant leadership and congregational spiritual formation this chapter will be divided into the following sections: (a) background to the problem; (b) statement of the problem; (c) purpose statement; (d) research questions; (e) assumptions and delimitations; (f) definition of terms; (g) significance of the study; and (h) summary of the design.

**Background to the Problem**

From the time of the American Revolution through the modern era, the church was the focal point of American culture (Moore, 2013). Until recently, the pastor has provided a fundamental example of leadership for the family, church, and the greater community (McEachin, 2011). Since the 1970s, the proliferation of nondenominational ministries and megachurches has resulted in a paradigm shift in church leadership. Larger and more diverse congregations have left pastors incapable of meeting the spiritual needs of the parishioners (Greely, 2007).

To manage large organizations, many churches have adopted popular business models for leadership (Palmer-Atkins, 2018). Some of the more generally used leadership models include transactional, authentic, charismatic, and transformational (Burns, 1978; Huat & Rampersad, 2017; Humphreys & Einstein, 2003; Ledbetter et al., 2016; Lingenfelter, 2008; Stone et al., 2004). When thoroughly examined, these models of leadership come up short in achieving lasting success for the organization and preparing others for future leadership opportunities (Burns; Lingenfelter; Stone et al.). Furthermore, a lack of spiritual growth and decreasing church attendance has left many ministries searching for a solution (Adsera, 2006; Gill, 2009; Olson, 2008).
Servant leadership is based on the concept that the leader functions best when he or she is serving the best interests of those whom they lead (Greenleaf, 2008). Numerous Christian organizations have adopted servant leadership on the premise that it most mirrors that of Christ. However, many variations of servant leadership exist, some of which are nothing more than a disguised version of authentic leadership. Genuine servant leadership “at the core must be a commitment to the Scriptures as authority over all of life, including the personal life and character of the leader-teacher” (Bredfeldt, 2006, p. 97).

The theological and biblical foundation for leadership begins in the book of Genesis, where God created mankind in His likeness and image. As the crowning achievement of God’s creation, mankind was immediately placed in a position of leadership and responsibility as he was given dominion over the earth (Genesis 1:26-28). Numerous other passages demonstrate that God ordained leaders to oversee and care for His creation, which includes people. A large number of Old and New Testament passages support the view that the best leaders are those whose lives are dedicated to serving those whom they lead, with Jesus Christ being the embodiment of a servant leader.

A review of the literature shows that a gap exists between the predominant models of leadership currently in use and servant leadership as demonstrated in the Bible. This study seeks to examine if a possible relationship exists between the pastoral servant leadership and congregational spiritual formation. This study may provide beneficial information that will assist local church leaders to positively impact the spiritual formation of their congregations through effective biblical servant leadership.

However, the impact that servant leadership has had on the spiritual formation of Christians and Christian institutions has so far shown to be inconclusive (McEachin, 2011;
Furthermore, anecdotal evidence suggests a correlation, but little to no empirical evidence exists. By specifically focusing on the relationship between pastoral servant leadership and congregational spiritual formation, this study will look to provide conclusive results that will add to the existing research in this area.

**Statement of the Problem**

Effective church leadership is critical in the spiritual formation of the members, growth of the church, and the effectiveness of the church in reaching the local community. The Apostle Paul describes the ministry leadership positions given by Christ to the church in Ephesians 4:11. This is followed by the reason for these positions, “to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (English Standard Version, 2016, Ephesians 4:12-13). This sets forth the purpose of leadership as being spiritual formation. This focus on leadership is based on the predominant belief that it involves “influence toward goals, which implies that leadership ought to have a direct impact on organizational performance or some sort of outcome” (Ledbetter et al., 2016, p. 20). Leadership methods based on one of the four models of authentic, charismatic, transactional, and transformational possess strengths, but their inherent weaknesses inevitably fail to deliver over the long haul. Therefore, a clear gap exists between the predominant leadership theories and the requirement for sustained results. Biblical servant leadership is offered to fill this gap. A proper biblical understanding of leadership is required if Christian leaders are to shepherd God’s people in a way that is commensurate with the example of Scripture.

1 Unless otherwise noted, all quotations from the Bible are from the English Standard Version (2016).
One of the more popular methods in contemporary use is servant leadership. Servant leadership can be generally defined as “the care taken by the servant first to make sure that other people’s highest priority needs are being served” (Greenleaf, 2008, p. 16). This style of leadership aims to meet the needs of those being served ahead of the needs of the leader. The theory guiding this study was developed in 1970 by Robert K. Greenleaf in his short essay titled *The Servant as Leader* and placed in its proper biblical perspective by Bredfeldt (2006). Genuine biblical servant leadership “at the core must be a commitment to the Scriptures as authority over all of life, including the personal life and character of the leader-teacher” (Bredfeldt, p. 97).

The goal of this research was to determine if biblical servant leadership has a positive relationship with congregational spiritual formation in Protestant churches within the United States of America. Pastors were administered the Self Assessment of Servant Leadership (SASL) survey to determine their type of leadership and congregational members were administered the Faith Maturity Scale (FMS) survey to determine the individual’s faith with respect to his love for God (vertical) and love for his neighbor (horizontal) (Benson et al., 1993).

**Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this correlational study was to determine if a relationship exists between pastoral servant leadership and congregational spiritual formation in Protestant churches within the United States of America. Servant leadership is defined as “The care taken by the servant first to make sure that other people’s highest priority needs are being served” (Greenleaf, 2008, p. 16). Various other similar terms are used in the place of “formation” such as “growth,” “maturity,” and “development.” However, for this study, spiritual formation is defined as “An intentional, multifaceted process which promotes the transformation by which Christ is formed
in us so that we can become His continually maturing disciples” (Gangel & Wilhoit, 1994, p. 16).

**Research Questions**

**Research Questions.** The following research questions guide this study:

**RQ1.** What proportion of pastors within the sample group employ servant leadership as measured by the SASL?

**RQ2.** What relationship, if any, exists between pastoral servant leadership and congregational members’ love for God as measured by the FMS?

**RQ3.** What relationship, if any, exists between pastoral servant leadership and congregational members’ love for their neighbor as measured by the FMS?

**RQ4.** What relationship, if any, exists between pastoral servant leadership and spiritual formation of congregational members as measured by the FMS?

**Assumptions and Delimitations**

**Research Assumptions**

The research for this study assumes that the Bible is God's revelation of Himself to humanity concerning His eternal plan and will and what it says is reliable and true. This includes the creation, fall, redemption, and restoration of mankind through faith in the atoning death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

This research assumes that Jesus Christ was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of a virgin, and lived a sinless life. As the express image of God, Christ lived a life of servanthood and provides the supreme example of servant leadership.

This research assumes that spiritual formation is evidenced by a life that is increasingly lived for Christ, with a displayed love for God and love for others. Love for God involves the individual’s “personal relationship to God, one’s effort to seek God, and the personal transformation one experiences in this divine encounter” (Benson et al., 1993, p. 4). Love for
others centers around the individual’s commitment and action in social service and justice (Benson et al.). People who are increasing in these two faith maturity planes will display a growing penchant to exhibit the fruit of the Spirit as defined in Galatians 5:22-23.

**Delimitations of the Research Design**

A single research study cannot cover every possible circumstance due to certain limitations. Therefore, this section outlining the delimitations of the research "clarifies the boundaries" of the study (Roberts, 2010, p. 156). The research study and its findings were limited to Protestant churches located in the United States of America. Churches outside this country were excluded from data collection. Non-Protestant groups and those belonging to other religions were also excluded from data collection.

This study included various Protestant denominations, which limited a denominationally specific focus. Although this study incorporated various denominations and ethnicities, it was limited only to English speaking participants.

The research was limited by the use of only one measure of servant leadership, the SASL. Similarly, the measure of spiritual formation was limited to the use of the FMS. No other instruments or methods were utilized to collect data for these areas. Furthermore, the SASL and FMS surveys were limited to the readiness of the participants to perform an honest self-assessment. Participant perceptions of predetermined outcomes and concern for lack of confidentiality could also have limited the veracity of their responses and limited the effectiveness of this data collection instrument. No controlling variables were employed since correlational research seeks to examine relationships.
Definition of Terms

1. **Authentic Leadership**: Huat and Rampersad (2017) assert that an authentic leader is one who leads by core values strongly rooted in ourselves and not leading by emotion, indecisiveness and lack of transparency . . . leads by example and not by words alone . . . someone who is trusted and respected” (p. 11).

2. **Charismatic Leadership**: The term charisma means "the endowment of divine grace" (Burns, 1978, p. 205). A person who is very likable and influential is often thought to be charismatic. Charismatic leaders have strong personalities and abilities that inspire the loyalty and commitment of their followers.

3. **Faith Maturity Scale (FMS)**: A 38-question survey that measures spiritual maturity in eight core areas that measure the participant’s trust and belief, experience of the fruits of faith, integration of faith and life, seeking spiritual growth, experience and nurture the faith community, holds life-affirming values, advocates social change, and acts and serves (Benson et al., 1993).

4. **Jesus**: The historical Jesus Christ of Nazareth.

5. **Leadership**: Wren (1995) defines leadership as an “effort of influence and the power to induce compliance” (p. 95).

6. **Self-Assessment of Servant Leadership survey (SASL)**: A 24-item self-assessment instrument based on a Likert scale, which measures servant leadership and was developed by Dr. Timothy Taylor in 2002.

7. **Servant Leadership**: “The care taken by the servant first to make sure that other people’s highest priority needs are being served” (Greenleaf, 2008, p. 16).
8. *Spiritual Formation:* “An intentional, multifaceted process which promotes the transformation by which Christ is formed in us so that we can become His continually maturing disciples” (Gangel & Wilhoit, 1994, p. 16).

9. *Spiritual Servant Leadership:* “The central tasks that define … (servant leadership) roles have to do with study, prayer, modeling, discipling, preaching, teaching, and equipping the saints for ministry” (Means, 1989, pp. 53-54).

10. *Transactional Leadership:* Transactional leadership involves an exchange between the leader and follower or in the case of business the superior and the subordinate (Humphreys & Einstein, 2003, p. 85).

11. *Transformational Leadership:* Developed by Robert Burns in 1978 and has been extensively used for the past forty years. “Transformational leadership is a style of leadership, where the leader is charged with identifying the needed change, creating a vision to guide the change through inspiration, and executing the change in tandem with committed members of the group” (Huat & Rampersad, 2017, p. 117).

**Significance of the Study**

This study seeks to contribute to the extant literature concerning servant leadership and spiritual formation. This study is significant because very little research has been performed about the relationship between servant leadership and spiritual formation. This researcher is interested in contributing to the body of knowledge concerning these subjects with the overall goal of enhancing the spiritual formation and church leadership. This current study suggests that a strong relationship exists between pastoral servant leadership and congregational spiritual formation. Therefore, future work could be targeted at training Christian leaders in servant
leadership theory and application as developed by Greenleaf (2008) and Blanchard and Hodges (2003).

**Summary of the Design**

The methodological research design for this study was a quantitative non-exploratory correlational approach, which is used to "describe and measure the degree of association (or relationship) between two or more variables or sets of scores" (Creswell, 2018, p. 50). This study collected quantitative data with regards to pastoral servant leadership behavior and tested its relationship with congregational spiritual formation. Pastors were administered the SASL survey to determine their type of leadership and congregational members were administered the FMS survey to determine the individual’s faith with respect to his love for God (vertical) and love for his neighbor (horizontal) (Benson et al., 1993). A non-experimental, correlational approach was selected as it is appropriate for “measuring variables and testing relationships between variables and testing relationships between variables in order to reveal . . . correlations” (Leavy, 2017, p. 40).

The primary independent variable was the servant leadership behavior of ministerial leadership. The participants’ style and level of leadership were gathered by way of the SASL questionnaire administered via the Survey Monkey online platform. This self-reporting tool was adapted from Page and Wong’s Self-Assessment of Servant Leadership Profile (SASLP) by Dr. Tim Taylor in 2002. The SASLP was created to develop a “conceptual framework for assessing servant-leadership” (Page & Wong, 2000, p. 69). The SASL is a 24-item self-assessment survey that measures servant leadership behaviors and characteristics (Taylor, 2002).

The primary dependent variable was the spiritual formation of congregational members. Congregational members were administered the FMS survey via the Survey Monkey online.
platform to determine the individual’s faith concerning his love for God (vertical) and love for his neighbor (horizontal) (Benson et al., 1993). The FMS is a 38-question survey that measures spiritual maturity in eight core areas that measure the participant’s trust and belief, experience of the fruits of faith, integration of faith and life, seeking spiritual growth, experience and nurture the faith community, holds life-affirming values, advocates social change, and acts and serves (Benson et al.).

A quantitative approach was appropriate because this study collected quantitative data via surveys that provided a numeric description of “trends, attitudes, or opinions of a population by studying a sample of that population” (Creswell, 2018, p. 50). The collected data were analyzed using the statistical computer program SPSS version 26 to test if a relationship exists between pastoral servant leadership and congregational spiritual formation.

The biblical leadership roles described in Ephesians 4:11-13 have the stated goal of spiritual formation of believers. Numerous studies have been performed examining both servant leadership and spiritual formation (Anderson, 2015; Belser, 2001; Crabtree, 2014; Heinz, 2017; Myung, 2014). However, the relationship between the two has received little to no exploration (McEachin, 2011). This chapter presents the proposed study that examined the relationship between pastoral servant leadership and congregational spiritual formation.

This chapter begins with the background and statement of the problem discussing the inadequacy of common social science leadership theories to meet the stated biblical purpose for leadership, being the spiritual formation of believers, and how servant leadership fills this requirement. However, the scarcity of studies that explore the relationship between servant leadership and spiritual formation drives the purpose of this correlational study. The purpose of this study was to determine if a relationship exists between pastoral servant leadership and
congregational spiritual formation. This purpose statement is followed by specific research questions that will frame the study. Next, assumptions and delimitations are discussed as well as a presentation of a definition of terms commonly used in the study. This is followed by the significance of the study that will potentially add to the sparse existing literature on this subject. Finally, a summary of the design is provided to include an introduction to the proposed instrumentation. The next chapter will provide a review of the literature that will demonstrate a gap in the studies concerning the relationship between pastoral servant leadership and congregational spiritual formation.
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

This literature review will demonstrate that there is an insufficient amount of extant research concerning the relationship between pastoral servant leadership and congregational spiritual formation. Effective church leadership is vital to the spiritual formation of the members and success of the work of the ministry. In his epistle to the Ephesians, the Apostle Paul describes the ministry leadership positions given by Christ to the church followed by the reason for these positions, “to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (Ephesians 4:12-13). This sets forth the goal or purpose for leadership as being spiritual formation.

This focus on leadership is based on the predominant belief that it involves “influence toward goals, which implies that leadership ought to have a direct impact on organizational performance or some sort of outcome” (Ledbetter et al., 2016, p. 20). A proper biblical understanding of leadership is required if Christian leaders are to shepherd God’s people in a way that is commensurate with the example of Scripture. The Bible provides numerous examples of servant leadership, which can be generally defined as “the care taken by the servant first to make sure that other people’s highest priority needs are being served” (Greenleaf, 2008, p. 16). This style of leadership aims to meet the needs of those being served ahead of the needs of the leader. The theory guiding this study was developed in 1970 by Greenleaf in his short essay titled The Servant as Leader and placed in its proper biblical perspective by Bredfeldt. Genuine biblical servant leadership must involve “a commitment to the Scriptures as authority over all of life, including the personal life and character of the leader-teacher” (Bredfeldt, 2006, p. 97).
This literature review will suggest that despite the foundational support for biblical servant leadership and follower spiritual formation, there exists a gap in the study concerning the relationship between the two. Although a considerable amount of research has been done in the areas of servant leadership and spiritual formation, the bulk of these studies primarily focus on the development of the leader with little emphasis on the development of the follower. Despite the existence of numerous studies concerning servant leadership and follower spiritual formation, few explore the relationship between the two (Akerlund, 2016; Johnson, 2017; Varnado, 2018, Yukl, 2013).

This literature review will provide the theological and theoretical frameworks for servant leadership and spiritual formation. The theological framework will provide the biblical and theological basis for servant leadership as well as individual and corporate spiritual growth. This will be followed by the theoretical basis for servant leadership and spiritual formation. Next, studies related to both servant leadership and spiritual formation will be reviewed. Finally, the gap between the studies of servant leadership and follower spiritual formation will be revealed.

**Theological Framework for the Study**

A study of pastoral servant leadership and its relationship to congregational spiritual formation necessarily begins with an examination of the biblical and theological basis of each variable. The ensuing exploration of the theological framework of servant leadership and spiritual formation will show that a sound biblical basis exists for each. This will commence with the theological basis for servant leadership.

**Servant Leadership**

Means (1989) holds that biblical or spiritual servant leaders possess key characteristics or tasks. “The central tasks that define … (servant leadership) roles have to do with study, prayer,
modeling, discipling, preaching, teaching, and equipping the saints for ministry” (Means, pp. 53-54). The biblical foundation for leadership is found in the book of Genesis, where God created mankind in His likeness and image. As the crowning achievement of God’s creation, mankind was immediately placed in a position of leadership and responsibility as they were given dominion over the earth and charged to care for it (Genesis 1:26-28). Numerous other passages demonstrate that God ordained leaders to oversee and care for His creation.

Psalm 90 provides a window into the key leadership characteristics of Moses. He demonstrated maturity as he asked God for wisdom and grace to lead the Israelite people. The pastoral image of a shepherd and his flock is often associated with servant leaders (Laniak, 2006). As God’s appointed shepherd of His flock, Moses cared for them by relying on God’s protection and provision. As the mediator and intercessor for the flock, Moses offered his life in exchange for God’s mercy on His people (Exodus 32:32). “To lead God’s ‘people like a flock,’ one must be in the presence of Him who has His way in the sanctuary, or in holiness” (Armerding, 1959, p. 352). An effective Christian leader must practice being in the presence of God daily through prayer, worship, and meditation on the Word.

Paul's letters to Timothy and Titus, as well as Peter's epistles, continue to apply the pastoral image of a shepherd and his flock to leaders. Modern-day shepherds must be aware that God places people who are created in His image under their care. These people are not to considered objects to be used, but rather led and served (Yaggy, 1999). Unlike secular leaders, a Christian leader serves under Christ who is called the Chief Shepherd (1 Peter 5:4). “A Christian leader must know who the Leader is. He must know who is in control and that he is not in control” (Lawrence, 1987, p. 317).
The metaphors used by the apostle Paul provide key insight into the purpose and style of his leadership. His use of the term stewardship points to the proper use of resources. The church has two God-given resources – His people and His Word (Harper, 2005, p. 6). An effective leader will pay particular attention to the appropriate administration of these God-given resources. In 1 Thessalonians 2:7, Paul uses the metaphor of a “nursing mother taking care of her children.” When raising children, mothers reflect God's image as they provide comfort, care, and nurturing combined with forgiveness and grace. Additionally, Paul's use of the term father points to his authority. In the first century, fathers reflected God's character as the authoritative head of the family, responsible for its provision and protection. Paul also used the metaphor of herald when referring to the purpose of the leader. In biblical times, the herald carried the message of the king. Christian leaders do not only manage resources and people but are also tasked with carrying God's message of salvation in Jesus.

Christ is the ultimate leader and embodies God’s purpose for leadership. As the One sent by the Father to die and atone for the sins of the world, Christ is the definitive example of servant leadership. “Good leadership brings out the best in people; it makes more of any individual than he would have been had he not followed” (Smith, 1986, p. 173). Jesus did just this as he led, taught, and prepared a small group of fishermen, tax collectors, and other social outcasts to create other followers and turn the world upside down with the message of the gospel after His death, resurrection, and ascension.

Jesus knew that leaders’ actions would be scrutinized; therefore they must hold themselves to a very high standard. “When leaders fail, more often it is a result of a character flaw than lack of competence” (Smith, 1986, p. 47). Likewise, Christian leaders are required to maintain a certain standard not required of non-Christian leaders. 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus
provide a list of the basic qualities required of leaders, however, the overarching quality is that of submitting to the lordship of Jesus Christ.

Another reason leaders are to maintain high standards is that they are to be examples to those whom they lead. In 1 Corinthians 11:1, Paul exhorts believers “Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.” Leadership expert Maxwell (2007) asserts that people will emulate the behavior of the leader and calls this “The Law of the Picture” (p. 178). Jesus demonstrates this aspect of servant leadership in John 13:4-17 where he washes His disciples’ feet. His sacrificial death on the cross exemplifies what Maxwell calls “The Law of the Sacrifice” (p. 240).

Effective leaders continually challenge themselves and their followers. A prime example of this is displayed in Christ’s restoration of Peter in John 21:15-19. In challenging themselves, leaders must honestly evaluate their strengths and weaknesses, which is key to good self-leadership. If a leader is not able to effectively manage his or her personal life, they will be ineffective in attempting to lead others. Credibility is essential for a leader, for if he or she does not possess it, people will not follow. If the leader is not honest in any one area, the followers will question his truthfulness in other areas (Myra et al., 2009).

Godly leaders will not seek the approval of others, but rather seek first God’s kingdom and righteousness. Whereas worldly leaders find their motivation and source in fame, power, money, or position, Christian leaders’ are motivated by love and derive their authority from God. The common thread of successful leadership that winds itself through the pages of the Bible is that success is tied to following the leading and direction of God. “If a leader’s life does not reflect the same degree of excellence and skill that is manifested in the organization to which she gives leadership, it will eventually result in a dissonance that will erode the trust and respect of those being led” (Rima, 2000, p. 30).
The biblical model of servant leadership is not a method that can be copied and meticulously reproduced in a cookie-cutter manner. God endows each person with a distinct personality as well as individually unique physical and mental abilities. God works through these individual traits as He develops their leadership qualities in service to Himself and others (Myra, 1987).

This principle of blending biblical principles and personalities also applies equally well to teams. When working in tandem, the sum of the whole is greater than the individual parts. “Over time a good team works increasingly well together because they can anticipate one another’s reactions and handle the inevitable surprises in a coordinated way” (Myra et al., 2009, p. 30).

Servant leaders are not focused on self, rather their attention is on those whom they serve.

**Focus on the Follower.** The biblical model of servant leadership focuses "more on the people who are their followers" (Stone et al., 2004, p. 359). Christians who are being led by a servant leader have a unique role to play in its success. The very name "Christian" that believers take on is a calling to be a follower or disciple of Christ. One of the key functions is imitation or modeling. Followers’ actions and character are a reflection and by-product of the leader. This can be either a positive or negative result based on the character of those whom they are emulating. Therefore, the followers must ensure that the behavior they are imitating is ultimately that of Jesus. Thus, Paul encouraged the early Christians to follow Christ, or even “Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ” (1 Corinthians 11:1).

One must learn to be a good follower if he or she desires to be in a position of leadership. A Christian leader should not expect anyone to follow them unless he or she is first a committed follower of Christ. Jesus stated, “If anyone would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all” (Mark 9:35). Notice, the emphasis here is not “leader of all,” but rather “servant of all.” This
is genuine biblical servant leadership with the purpose of spiritual formation of the church and its members (Ephesians 4:11-13).

**Spiritual Formation**

Gangel and Wilhoit (1994), define spiritual formation as “An intentional, multifaceted process which promotes the transformation by which Christ is formed in us so that we can become His continually maturing disciples” (p. 16). The biblical foundations for spiritual formation are found in numerous places throughout the scriptures. The aforementioned Ephesians 4:11-13 not only provides the purpose for church leadership but also provides the goal of maturity for which all Christians are to strive. Maturity in this sense implies completion or perfection. In Ephesians 1:4 God calls Christians to be holy. Paul states that God predestined His sons and daughters to be "conformed to the image of His Son" (Romans 8:29). Furthermore, in Philippians 3:10 Paul asserts that the only way to be conformed to His image is to “know Him.” According to Wuest (2002), “to know” means“ to know by experience” (p. 93).

Jesus confronted and saved Paul on the road to Damascus with the intent of bringing Paul into an intimate knowledge of Himself that would continually grow throughout his life and be perfected at death (Ellsworth, 2004). Paul also understood that his spiritual transformation was a requirement for him to preach, teach, and exhort with his whole being (Meye, 1994). Similarly, the purpose of spiritual formation unto holiness is for all Christians to more perfectly proclaim the gospel in the way they live as well as in their speech.

Spiritual formation is impossible through mere human efforts such as engaging in spiritual disciplines and receiving counseling or sensitivity training to improve relationships with others. Reymond (1998) notes, “Christians can no more sanctify themselves by their own efforts than can justify themselves by their own effort” (p. 778). The Holy Spirit plays a crucial role in
the life of the believer. Biblical passages such as John 17:17, Romans 8:13-14, 1 Thessalonians 5:23, and 2 Corinthians 3:18 insist that God is the agent who causes spiritual formation in the life of the Believer. Rather than a once and for all experience, salvation can be considered a past occurrence (we were saved), an ongoing process (we are being saved), and a future event (we shall be saved). These different aspects are also known as justification, sanctification, and glorification (Erickson, 2013; Geisler, 2004; Grudem, 2004; Reymond, 1998). The Holy Spirit's work in justification involves a conviction of sin and regeneration. In sanctification, the Spirit persists in a conviction of sin and also gives illumination to God’s Word, intercedes in prayer and indwells and empowers the believer to grow in grace through the transformation of moral and spiritual character. The completion of the sanctification process is called glorification, where believers will be spiritually and morally perfected (Erickson).

The Holy Spirit assists in the spiritual formation of the believer by equipping them to live a life of obedience to God and restoring relationships with God and others. A maturing Christian will consistently produce the fruits of the Spirit, which are “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control” (Galatians 5:22-23).

Although spiritual formation is empowered by the Holy Spirit, Christians are not passive in their spiritual formation. “To the contrary, he is to be fully and consciously engaged in his sanctification” (Reymond, 1998, p. 779). The believer must cooperate and participate with God in the process. Reymond notes that God provides for the spiritual growth His church with special means. The first is “reading and preaching of the Word of God” (p. 779). God’s Word is an essential means by which Christian come to faith and continue to grow therein. Romans 10:17 states, “So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.”
The second means God has provided for His church to grow spiritually is through “the receiving and attendance upon the sacraments of the church” (Reymond, 1998, p. 780). These instruments include baptism and the Lord’s Supper. Participation in these rites serves to remind Christians of the greater spiritual meaning associated with them. In baptism, the Christian is identifying with Christ (putting on Christ - Galatians 3:27) by publicly declaring his or her faith in Christ and proclaiming Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection. He or she is also declaring and considering themselves to be dead to sin (Romans 6:3, 11). In the Lord’s Supper, the Christian is taking part in remembrance of Christ’s new covenant in His blood and His atoning death on the cross (1 Corinthians 11:24-25).

The third means God has provided for His church to grow spiritually is through “prayers of adoration, confession, thanksgiving, and supplication” (Reymond, 1998, p. 780). Numerous passages such as Philippians 4:6, 1 John 5:14, and James 4:2 declare that God commands, hears, and answers the prayers of His people. Communication is key to growth and understanding in both the natural and spiritual realms.

The fourth means that God provides for the spiritual formation of His church is the “fellowship of the saints in the gathered assembly” (Reymond, 1998, p. 780). Humans were created to worship God. The Westminster Confession of Faith (1851) makes it clear, "Man's chief and highest end is to glorify God, and fully to enjoy him forever" (p. 165). The desire to worship is so strong that if mankind does not worship God, he will worship something else (Romans 1:25). Only a regenerate person will have a desire to worship the Creator and the Spirit is required for regeneration (1 Corinthians 12:3). This gives further insight into the statement of Jesus that the Father is seeking true worshippers who worship Him in spirit and truth (John 4:23-
24). Worship is an essential part of spiritual growth and is something that believers must do in their daily walk with God (Averback, 2008).

As a part of spiritual formation, worship is a learned behavior that the early church made every effort to impart on Christians. This was done through the development of an orderly worship service consisting of corporate prayer, reading of Scriptures, sermons, singing of hymns, and the Lord’s Supper. Through regular participation in the liturgy, Christians formed worship habits, which enhanced corporate as well as individual spiritual development (Blaising, 1994).

Corporate worship as an aid to spiritual formation emphasizes the importance of community. God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone” (Genesis 2:18). S. Lowe and M. Lowe (2018) assert that God created humans as social beings who are “divinely predestined to inhabit a world with others” (p. 19). The early New Testament church was designed so believers could worship God and for individual and corporate edification. This was so critical that the writer of Hebrews warned the church to not forsake “the assembling of ourselves together” (King James Version, 1769/1995, Hebrews 10:25). Chapter two of the book of Acts depicts a developing and flourishing community of new Christians who encouraged each other as they met daily to fellowship and worship.

The final mean that God provides for the spiritual formation of His people involves “all of the providences of life which God works together to perfect them that which he has predestined for them, namely, their conformity to the image of his Son” (Reymond, 1998, p. 780). The Bible clearly shows that spiritual formation is a gradual process that does not occur in isolation, but rather takes place within a community. In Ephesians 2:19-21 Paul explains that Christians are “fellow citizens . . . of the household of God . . . being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord.” Paul continues this theme in Ephesians 4:15-16 when he declares,
“we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together . . . makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.” S. Lowe and M. Lowe (2018) note, "That process is not just an individual one carried out through solitary spiritual exercises but is also a corporate one carried out through relational interactions (including corporate worship)” (p. 211).

Although these instruments are means for spiritual formation it does not occur separately from the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer. Paul reminds his readers “for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure” (Philippians 2:13). Pastors preach, teach, administer, and assist the congregants, parishioners cooperate with the Spirit, and the Holy Spirit works in and through all to generate spiritual formation.

The biblical basis for servant leadership and spiritual formation is clear. Next, this literature review will examine the theoretical framework for servant leadership and spiritual formation.

**Theoretical Framework for the Study**

Like their secular counterparts, Christian leaders have long sought after a style of leadership that would withstand the winds of change. Some of these various models have included transactional, authentic, charismatic, and transformational. However, their inherent weaknesses leave the Christian leader searching for a better model. One of the most popular leadership models of the past 40-years is servant leadership, which asserts that serving others is the best way to lead (Greenleaf, 2008). Many Christian organizations have adopted servant leadership on the basis that it has a strong biblical foundation, with the most notable example being that of Christ. This theoretical framework will provide the theoretical foundations for servant leadership and spiritual formation. To form a basis for the necessity and viability of
servant leadership, transactional, authentic, charismatic, and transformational leadership theories will first be briefly reviewed.

Types of Leadership

There are many different theories and models of leadership with most falling into one of four general categories. For this review, four prevailing models will be reviewed along with their strengths and weaknesses. They are transactional, authentic, charismatic, and transformational. When thoroughly examined, these models of leadership come up short in achieving lasting success for the organization as well as follower development for future leadership opportunities (Burns, 1978; Lingenfelter, 2008; Stone et al., 2004). This brief review will show that a biblical model of servant leadership is superior to the other prevailing models.

Transactional Leadership. Transactional leadership involves an exchange between the leader and follower, or in the case of business the superior and the subordinate. This is the most common type of leadership found in the contemporary business world as people agree to provide services for pay, or in the political realm where politicians make promises to represent the interests of those who vote for them, in return, the voters will reelect the official if he or she continues to make good on the promises (Burns, 1978).

In any type of transaction, both parties are dependent upon the other as contributions and rewards are understood. The subordinates get compensated for providing the services that the superior needs (Humphreys & Einstein, 2003). Transactional leadership works well so long as both parties continue to provide what the other needs or requires. Humphreys and Einstein note, “transactional leader behavior (contingent reward) has been positively correlated to follower attitudes and performance” (p. 85).
Despite this, the same concept that makes transactional leadership attractive is also its weakness. This type of leadership is devoid of values and focuses on a control that is contingent upon rewards. The problem is that the focus is too narrow as it is concentrated on a power transaction or struggle involving the power of the leader and the power of the follower, with each desiring satisfy self-interest. It is effective when rewards are present, but falters quickly when rewards are no longer available (Lingenfelter, 2008).

Transactional leaders are not concerned with progressive change, but rather seek to maintain the status quo (Huat & Rampersad, 2017). As such, transactional leadership can become detrimental to the spiritual growth of those in a church or Christian educational setting. From this standpoint, Christian educators or pastors who use transactional leadership could begin to look at their calling as simply a job or a way to make money, with the amount of effort they put into their ministry being directly proportional to how much they are compensated. This runs contrary to the belief that faith and spirituality provide the best motivation to help others reach their fullest potential. Ministry is not a mere transaction; it involves a relationship (Ledbetter et al., 2016).

If transactional leadership is a simple transaction or merely a process of exchange, it is severely lacking as a leadership method. It boils down to nothing more than a contractual agreement where both parties agree to abide by the terms of the contract. If one party does not comply, then the contract is dissolved. In the case of a church, if the preacher does not preach messages the congregation likes, the members may feel they do not have to pay him or attend church. This is the reason transactional leadership ultimately fails. It is selfish on the part of both parties (Lingenfelter, 2008). Transactional leadership only exists to benefit the leader and the follower and the development of relationships is unimportant. By contrast, real leadership
benefits from the relationship between leaders and followers (Burns, 1978; Ledbetter et al., 2016).

**Authentic Leadership.** Huat and Rampersad (2017) assert that an authentic leader is one “who leads by core values strongly rooted in ourselves and not leading by emotion, indecisiveness, and lack of transparency . . . leads by example and not by words alone . . . someone who is trusted and respected” (p. 11). It is critical that the authentic leader posses goals, objectives, a vision, and a mission. Without these, the leader has no direction, no map, and no compass. From there the model expands outward to self-awareness where the leader honestly assesses his or her strengths or weaknesses. Next, the authentic leadership model expands to include self-mastery, which involves a life of continuous improvement in all aspects of personal as well as professional endeavors. Finally, authentic leaders must possess various leadership qualities such as communication, courage, commitment, competence, and discernment (Huat & Rampersad).

The most important quality an authentic leader must possess is emotional intelligence (EQ), which is the quality of the leader who has “attuned himself to people’s feelings and moved them in a positive emotional direction” (Huat & Rampersad, 2017, p. 117). The leader keys in on the followers’ emotions, builds them up and drives them in a positive direction. The goal is to put them in a positive emotional state that will empower the team to accomplish more than if their emotions are out of sync and negative.

Authentic leaders must present the impression that the leader genuinely cares for the people he or she leads as well as the good of the organization or mission (Huat & Rampersad, 2017). The Apostle Paul demonstrated heartfelt emotion and affection towards the members of the early church (Ledbetter et al., 2016, p. 231). Authentic leaders are humble and not boastful.
This humility is not feigned or manufactured but is developed by a life of enduring tests and trials. Bredfeldt (2006) holds that authentic leaders are “the genuine article, the real thing” (p. 189).

Authentic leadership is most successful when the leader exhibits a personality that is considered to be real or authentic. This can be problematic if the leader is introverted or does not possess good interpersonal skills, as he or she may appear to be phony. Furthermore, a leader who appears to be inauthentic will be unable to detect the emotional climate of his or her followers. This is the reason EQ is so important (Huat & Rampersad, 2017).

This model is often compared to and confused with servant leadership due to the numerous characteristics they share such as communication, competence, listening, and encouragement. The principal difference between the two lies in the motivation of the leader (Crabtree, 2014). If the authentic leader's motivation cannot be clearly discerned, or if he or she merely appears to be playing the role of a cheerleader trying to pump up the team, they may be viewed as a scam artist and lose their power to lead. Authentic leadership is often a method used by those whose sole motivation is the completion of the mission. By comparison, servant leadership’s motivation derives from serving others and does not require the leader to energize the team and control or manipulate the emotions of the followers to achieve success (Ledbetter et al., 2016).

**Charismatic Leadership.** The term charisma means "the endowment of divine grace" (Burns, 1978, p. 205). A person who is very likable and influential is often thought to be charismatic. “Charismatic leaders possess a sort of magical, even mystical, presence that compels people to follow them” (Ledbetter et al., 2016, p. 22). They often have strong personalities and abilities that inspire loyalty and commitment from their followers. These
leaders are eternal optimists, exuding positivity, and always seeing the future as bright. Charismatic leaders look for potential in their followers and wish to help them develop that potential. They are also known for generously donating their time and energy to accomplish the stated goal. The qualities of a charismatic leader can be emulated for a time, but if this kind of energy is not natural it will soon fade. These characteristics are innate to a charismatic person and a result of the individual’s desire to achieve self-actualization (Tuffley, 2012).

Although charismatic leaders can energize their followers to take on enormous challenges and often produce initial impressive results, in the long run, they usually fall short. Those who use this type of leadership may not be technically proficient or knowledgeable, yet can convince people to follow them even though they are often poor managers (Kotter, 2012). Instead of charismatic leadership, Burns (1978) prefers the term “heroic leadership” to describe this method because it describes the followers’ “belief in leaders because of their personage alone” (p. 394). Because charismatic leaders become idolized as heroes “no true relationship exists” between them and their followers (Burns, 1978, p. 401). Despite their incredible drive, charismatic leaders often fall victim to cynicism, insecurity, moodiness, perfectionism, and pride (Huat & Rampersad, 2017).

**Transformational Leadership.** Developed by Burns in 1978, transformational leadership is a style where the leader is charged with “identifying the needed change, creating a vision to guide the change through inspiration, and executing the change in tandem with committed members of the group ” (Huat & Rampersad, 2017, p. 117). Transformational leadership relies heavily on the vision casting ability of the leader with the ultimate purpose being betterment of the company or completion of the mission. The goal of the transformational leader is to create a culture of “commitment to organizational objectives, and then empowering
followers to accomplish those objectives (with the result of) enhanced follower performance” (Stone et al., 2004, p. 350).

The spotlight on mission or goal accomplishment energized by follower empowerment combined with innovation makes this a very attractive model on the surface. Follower input, advice, and participation in problem-solving and decision-making are hallmarks of this approach. Empowerment and the freedom to pursue innovation is very alluring to followers as it makes them feel like their voices are heard and that they are stakeholders in the organization, rather than simply cogs in a machine. This type of leadership stimulates beliefs, morals, and values as well as aids in the maturity of both leader and followers (Ledbetter et al., 2016).

Transformational leaders often act as a mentor or coach, who recognize achievement and encourage the growth of their followers so long as it does not interfere with the overall mission or goal (Stone et al., 2004). Although this type of leadership can be extremely effective and inspiring, the main focus of the transformational leader is on the achievement of the objective.

Although many biblical leaders were truly transformational, the main difference between transformational leadership and servant leadership is the leader’s focus. Transformational leaders’ underlying motive is organizational goals, whereas servant leaders’ main concern is their followers” (Stone et al., 2004). If not handled carefully, transformational leadership’s heightened concentration on mission accomplishment could be perceived as follower manipulation.

The four popular leadership styles above have notable strengths, but their weaknesses will inevitably fail. This presents a clear gap in the need for sustained results and effective leadership as offered by these four models. Therefore, a biblical model of servant leadership is offered to fill this gap.
Servant Leadership

The term “Servant Leadership” was coined in 1970 in the short essay by Robert Greenleaf called The Servant as Leader. Greenleaf (2008) asserts that this type of leadership manifests itself in “the care taken by the servant first to make sure that other people’s highest priority needs are being served (p. 16). Following a 40-year career at AT&T, he set out to explore how organizations could simultaneously improve operations and customer service. Greenleaf was inspired by the novel Journey to the East by Herman Hesse where the main character is a servant who sustains a group of people on a spiritual quest. Greenleaf observed that the “central meaning of this story is that great leaders must first serve others and that this simple fact is central to his or her greatness. True leadership emerges from those whose primary motivation is a desire to help others” (Spears, 1995, p. 3). Rather than resort to coercive leadership techniques, Greenleaf encouraged the use of increased communication and group consensus (Northouse, 2016).

Spears (1995) identifies ten key characteristics possessed by servant leaders: listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, commitment to the growth of people, and building community. This provided the first conceptualized model from which the principles of servant leadership could be taught to those seeking to employ this approach (Northouse, 2016). This approach has received praise from numerous authorities in the field of leadership such as Blanchard and Hodges (2003), Covey (1989), DePree (1995), and Maxwell (2007).

Senge (1995) suggests that dramatic advancements in technology and science have changed how humanity views the world where things are more important than people. Servant leadership realigns this skewed worldview where institutions are built on interrelationships and
not things. The result “might be in deeper harmony with our emerging understanding of the physical universe and a more positive force in our increasingly interdependent world” (Senge, 1995, p. 228).

Research on servant leadership has continued into the 21st century. Patterson (2003) asserts that this approach encourages reciprocal selflessness between leader and follower and that the virtuous character of servant leadership was modeled by Jesus Christ. His observations resulted in a “value-based model of servant leadership that distinguished seven constructs that characterize the virtues and shape the behaviors of servant leaders” (Northouse, 2015, p. 229).

Winston (2004) built upon Patterson’s work and further developed the follower-as-leader approach. Winston’s case study at Heritage College demonstrates that the values of the followers compel the leader to lead selflessly.

Howatson-Jones (2004) noted that the altruistic character of servant leadership leads to improved organizational effectiveness and enhanced the organizational community through community building, improved interpersonal relations, listening, persuasion, and stewardship. Humphreys (2005) advanced the concept by maintaining that servant leadership can be instrumental in promoting the common good of all persons and building a better society.

In addition to Spears (1995), numerous other studies concerning servant leadership have produced a wide range of key characteristics. Laub (1999) asserts the key characteristics of servant leadership involve developing people, shared leadership, authenticity, valuing people, providing leadership, and building community. Barbuto and Wheeler (2006) claim these key characteristics include an altruistic calling, emotional healing, persuasive mapping, organizational stewardship, and wisdom. van Dierendonck and Nuijten (2011) note these
characteristics include empowerment, humility, standing back, authenticity, forgiveness, courage, accountability, and stewardship.

These and various other studies outlining the characteristics of servant leadership share commonalities, but also several differences. Liden et al. (2008) attempted to organize these characteristics into a working model. This was later modified by Liden et al. (2014). Northouse (2016) notes that this model organizes these characteristics into three main components: antecedent conditions, servant leader behaviors, and leadership outcomes.

Antecedent conditions consider the context and culture, leader attributes, and follower receptivity. Servant leadership is more effective in some contexts and cultures than others. This model is effective in settings where power-sharing and teamwork are common such as hospitals. Conversely, servant leadership may not be effective in competitive environments such as Wall Street brokerage firms. Additionally, how the leader demonstrates servant leadership is dependent upon the leader’s values, motivations, emotional intelligence. Also, followers must be receptive to the efforts of a servant leader. This model will be less effective if the followers are suspicious of the servant leader’s motives or do not desire this style (Northouse, 2016).

Servant leader behaviors make up the “central focus of servant leadership” (Northouse, 2016, p. 233). The first is conceptualizing, or how the leader understands the organization’s purpose and makeup. The next is emotional healing and being sensitive to the well-being of others. The third behavior involves putting the needs of the follower first, follower by helping the followers to grow and succeed. Ethical behavior is critical for any leader, but especially so for servant leaders as they are not only setting the example but serving the followers. Servant leaders empower their followers to make decisions and provide individual contributions to the
organization. This is closely related to follower development. Finally, servant leaders give back to the community and enhance their value rather than seeking personal gain (Northouse).

The outcome of any leadership is the successful accomplishment of the goal or mission. However, “the central goal of servant leadership is to create healthy organizations that nurture individual growth, strengthen organizational performance, and, in the end, produce a positive impact on society” (Northouse, 2016, p. 236). Servant leadership does this by focusing on a combination of follower performance and growth, organizational performance, and societal impact (Northouse).

Servant leadership has become widely popular among many institutions to include businesses, schools, and religious institutions (Spears, 1995). The success of servant leadership in practice cannot be disputed. Many Fortune 500 companies with proven track records such as AT&T, Southwest Airlines, Starbucks, and the Vanguard Group have employed servant leadership or its elements (Northouse, 2016).

Secular and Biblical Servant Leadership Compared. On the surface, servant leadership may appear to be wholly compatible with the teachings of the Bible. However, there is a distinct difference between secular and biblical servant leadership. Niewold (2007) observes that “servant leadership in its secular form is based on non-Christian secular and religious ideas” (p. 118). Greenleaf did not develop this theory from a study of the Bible. He “did not grow up in a church-identified home” but instead chose to find his “own way through a spiritual orientation” (Greenleaf, 1998, p. 265). Although Greenleaf was a spiritual man who had training in “training in both transcendental and Buddhist meditation,” his concern for the seeking welfare of others before self as well as the development of the servant leadership model is not grounded in Christian beliefs (p. 267). Anderson (2008) notes that Greenleaf “believed strongly in the
capabilities of the human spirit, but failed to really understand the capabilities of the Holy Spirit that dwells in the heart of those that are born again” (p. 8).

The fundamental difference between secular servant leadership and biblical servant leadership lies in its focus. Secular servant leadership is man-centered. Greenleaf moved the leader’s focus away from self to that of the followers (Anderson, 2008). However, this focus was on the needs of the followers. For the secular servant leader, he or she may focus on what the followers’ desire, what society or the business world deems to be best, or the overall accomplishment of the job or mission. The secular servant leader and his or her followers “find their human fulfillment apart from the transforming power of Jesus Christ” (Niewold, 2007, p. 126).

Biblical servant leadership is God-centered. Although it includes the characteristics identified by Greenleaf, it goes deeper. Rather than being focused on self, followers, the organization, or the mission, biblical servant leadership is focused on “God and what He has in view for the future” (Anderson, 2008, p. 12). To take this a step further, the Bible makes it clear in 1 Corinthians 10:3, “whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.” This concept is emphasized in Colossians 3:17 and 1 Peter 4:11. Anderson echoes this sentiment when he states that the “ultimate purpose of all human activity is the glory of God” (p.12). Therefore, the central goal of the biblical servant leader and those whom he or she leads is the glory of God.

As servant leadership has been adapted to the business world, it has become commonly referred to as values-based leadership. This is a style of leadership that “emphasizes the character of the leader whose life brings respect and who places more value on the follower than on the task to be accomplished” (Bredfeldt, 2006, p. 89). A values-based character is an essential part of being an effective servant leader. However, there is a clear distinction between the common
value-based model and servant leadership as found in the Bible. All people possess values. But
the crux of the matter is upon what those values are based. Are they based upon the values of a
post-modern, atheistic society? Are they based upon the self-serving desire of the leader or
organization? Or are these values based upon the teachings of the Bible? The source of value-
based servant leadership is the key (Bredfeldt).

Blanchard and Hodges (2003) contend, “True success in servant leadership depends on
how clearly values are defined, ordered, and lived by the leader” (p. 40). Many variations of
servant leadership exist, some of which are nothing more than a disguised version of authentic
leadership. Genuine servant leadership “at the core must be a commitment to the Scriptures as
authority over all of life, including the personal life and character of the leader-teacher”
(Bredfeldt, 2006, p. 97). This will be modeled in the biblical servant leader’s commitment to
“study, prayer, modeling, discipling, preaching, teaching, and equipping the saints for ministry”
(Means, 1989, pp. 53-54).

Measuring Servant Leadership. During the early years of its implementation, the
measurement of servant leadership was normally done through anecdotal means. To quantify
servant leadership behavior characteristics of leaders, Page and Wong (2000) developed the Self-
Assessment of Servant Leadership Profile (SASLP). The SASLP was created to develop a
“conceptual framework for assessing servant-leadership” (Page & Wong, p. 1). The SASLP
consists of a 99-question survey covering 12 core areas using a seven-point Likert scale that
ranges from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree. The 99-question survey was a groundbreaking
development in the study of servant leadership and was widely used. However, it was somewhat
cumbersome due to its size.
Dr. Tim Taylor (2002) adapted Page and Wong’s (2000) instrument and developed the Self-Assessment of Servant Leadership (SASL) to measure servant leadership behaviors and characteristics with a less cumbersome instrument. He reduced Page and Wong’s 99-item assessment to a 24-item self-assessment survey, but still maintained unity with the 12 core characteristics of the SASLP. The SASL survey consists of 24 questions and uses a seven-point Likert scale that ranges from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree.

Servant leadership has proven to be an effective model in many secular and religious organizations. But servant leadership as demonstrated in the Bible was not developed for commercial or non-spiritual success; it was instituted for the spiritual growth and formation of the church and its members (Ephesians 4:11-13). With the theoretical basis for servant leadership established, this essay turns to the theoretical foundation for spiritual formation.

**Spiritual Formation**

This section will provide a theoretical basis for spiritual formation and show that spiritual formation is a progressive lifetime process (Erickson, 2013; Fowler, 1987; Peck, 1987). Gangel and Wilhoit (1994), define spiritual formation as “An intentional, multifaceted process which promotes the transformation by which Christ is formed in us so that we can become His continually maturing disciples” (p. 16). Although the biblical basis for spiritual formation has already been established, many biblical references will be used in this section to support the theoretical basis.

The modern theoretical study of spiritual formation finds its origins in the social science developmental theories of Piaget and Kohlberg. Piaget was a “secular philosopher and biologist. He gave little if any thought to spiritual matters” (Yount, 2010, p. 112). However, there is much that can be gained from his insight into human cognitive development. He proposed a four-stage
developmental theory consisting of the sensorimotor stage (birth to age 2), preoperational stage (ages 2-7), concrete operational stage (ages 7-11), and formal operational stage (age 11+) (Yount). Later, Piaget proposed three stages of moral reasoning: preterminal (birth to age 5), moral realism (age 6-9), and moral relativism (age 10+) (Yount).

Kohlberg was deeply moved by the Holocaust and its slaughter of six million Jews at the hands of many Lutheran and Catholic Germans who claimed they were “only following orders” (Yount, 2010). Wondering how Christians could commit such atrocities, he became fascinated with the subject of cognitive development and its relation to moral reasoning (Yount).

Kohlberg built upon Piaget’s work in this area and proposed a three-tiered, six-stage theory of moral reasoning development (Yount, 2010). The first tier is called “preconventional morality.” In this tier, stage one is “punishment-obedience” where wrong behavior is punished and the right behavior is rewarded. Stage two is “instrumental-relativist” where self-centered deal-making is involved. The second tier is called “conventional morality.” In this tier, stage three is “good boy-nice girl” where the individual seeks approval from those in authority by performing the right actions. Stage four is “law and order” where the individual is taught to know and obey the laws and rules of society. The last tier is called “postconventional reasoning” which normally begins in adolescence. Stage five in this tier is the “social contract” where people agree to follow the rules for the betterment of the group. Stage six is the “universal ethical principle” where people base their actions on self-chosen ethical, moral, or religious principles (Yount).

Fowler (1987) produced a six-stage theory of faith development based on the work of Piaget and Kohlberg. Although commonly used to measure Christian spiritual formation, Fowler’s theory applies to traditional faiths as well as alternative religions and secular
worldviews. The first stage is “intuitive-projective” (preschool age) where fantasy and reality often merge, but basic spiritual ideas are learned from parents. The second stage is “mythic-literal” (school-age children). At this stage, children develop logical thought patterns and understand faith stories in a literal manner. The third stage is “synthetic-conventional” (teenage) where people tend to adopt a belief system that fits with their social group. The fourth stage is “individuative-reflective” (young adulthood) where people begin to question their spiritual belief system. The fifth stage is “conjunctive” (mid-life) when realities and mysteries of life drive people to return to their earlier held spiritual beliefs, stories, and symbols. The final stage is “universalizing.” Very few people reach this stage, but those who do devote their lives to their spiritual faith and the service of others (Fowler).

Peck (1987) simplified Fowler’s theory with a four-stage model of spiritual formation. Rather than being tied to the age-based theories of development, he asserts that these steps are the most common stages people go through as they develop spiritually. The first stage is “chaotic-antisocial.” People in this stage are self-centered and live unprincipled lives. A dramatic event is normally the only way the person will “convert” to the next stage. The second stage is “formal-institutional” where people find stability in a church or some other formal spiritual group or organization. The third stage is “skeptic-individual.” At this stage, people begin to question their spiritual beliefs and often discontinue association with their church or faith group. The final stage is “mystical-communal.” In this stage life’s mysteries (such as death and the afterlife) cause people to return to their spiritual belief system and pursue selfless pursuits that benefit others and the community (Peck).

Measuring spiritual formation can be challenging. The influence of social science theory and secular modernism has led many to gauge the success or failure of church leadership based
on a business-like bottom line of increased profits and people. But this is at odds with the biblical model, which asserts that the purpose of leadership is the spiritual formation of individuals and the church that they compose (Ephesians 4:11-13).

Spiritual formation should not be measured by the size of the congregation or the number of tithes and offerings collected every week (Blackaby, H., & Blackaby, R., 2011). Instead, it should be gauged by the number of people it prepares and produces to make an impact on the world with the message of the gospel (Warren, 1995). The focus should not be on church growth as much as church health. A healthy church is composed of people who are in progressing in spiritual maturity. The Apostle Paul reinforces this with his proclamation of Christ “warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ” (Colossians, 1:28). In Matthew 28:19 Christ commands His followers to “make disciples of all nations.” Spiritual formation is not for the sole benefit of the individual. Rather, it is so that the Christian can reproduce by sharing the gospel with others.

In addition to social science theory, the Bible presents a theoretical basis for spiritual formation. Throughout his New Testament epistles, the Apostle Paul presents five elements of spiritual formation. These are identifying with Christ, enduring suffering, experiencing the presence of God, receiving and applying the wisdom of God, and imitating a godly example (Samra, 2008). These elements can be used as a measuring rod for individual believers as well as churches to assess if they are experiencing spiritual formation.

**Identifying with Christ.** The first thing needed for spiritual formation is identification with Christ. The Apostle Paul asserts that an increasing association with Jesus and His church is essential for conforming to Christ’s character (Erickson, 2013; Samra, 2008). In John 16 Jesus gives the illustration of being and staying attached to a vine to facilitate growth, maturity, and the
production of fruit. This example of abiding infers community as a branch cannot survive, grow, or produce alone; it must be connected to the vine. A sure sign of spiritual growth and maturity is the consistent production of the fruit of the Spirit as described in Galatians 5:22-23 (Erickson). Abiding in the vine (Christ) is critical for spiritual formation and the production of fruit (Galatians 4:19). The key to spiritual formation is identifying with Christ, which is closely associated with keeping His commandments, prayer, and bearing fruit (Erickson).

**Enduring Suffering.** The second element of spiritual formation is enduring suffering. Progressive maturation through suffering and trial is demonstrated throughout Scripture (Romans 5:3-5; Hebrews 10:36; James 1:2-4; 1 Peter 1:6-9; 2 Peter 1:6-7). Christ stated that His followers would suffer, but are also blessed when they suffer for the faith in Him (Matthew 5:10-12). The Bible clearly states that an important result of suffering is spiritual growth. “Consider it a great joy, my brothers, whenever you experience various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. But endurance must do its complete work, so that you may be mature and complete, lacking nothing” (Holman Christian Standard Bible, 2009, James 1:2-4). One purpose of suffering in the life of a Christian is to strengthen and purify the believer’s faith (Sproul, 1988). The best place to endure suffering is within a community of believers where one can find comfort, encouragement, and compassion (Samra, 2008).

**Experiencing the Presence of God.** The third element of spiritual formation requires the believer to experience the presence of God. This is closely related to identifying with Christ and abiding in Him. Ezekiel 37:26-28 explains that God would make Israel holy in that they would be “set apart (declared holy) and transformed (become holy) through the presence of God” (Samra, 2008, 119). Organized community worship is the place where young believers learn to practice God’s presence through fellowship, prayer, song, and the preaching of the Word. As
believers mature they learn to experience God’s presence any time, even throughout their daily work. Spiritual formation does not “depend upon changing our works, but in doing that for God’s sake, which we commonly do for our own” (Brother Lawrence, 1906, p. 20).

**Receive and Apply the Wisdom of God.** The fourth element of spiritual formation requires the believer to receive and apply the wisdom of God to his or her life. Christian leaders play an essential role in the spiritual development of believers. As such, one critical requirement for church leaders is the ability to teach (1 Timothy 3:2; 2 Timothy 2:24; Titus 1:9). Believers must receive instruction in the Word of God if they are to grow in grace. But merely receiving the Word is insufficient because cognitive knowledge does not always produce the transformation of the heart. Markuly (2003) states, “The head reaches the fruition of its search from wisdom not through the faculty of reason, as important as that may be, but through the heart” (p. 3). The Holy Spirit facilitates the reception and application of God’s wisdom (John 14:26; Philippians 4:9; 1 John 2:20-27).

Living out one’s faith is a way to advance spiritual formation and provides an opportunity for the believer to give an outward demonstration of the inner transformation (Buchanan & Hyde, 2008). Followers of Christ must live a “life in the world oriented toward God” (McGrath, 1994, p. 33). James emphasizes this when he writes, “But be doers of the word, and not hearers only” (James 1:22).

**Imitating a Godly Example.** Finally, imitating the example of other godly believers is the fifth means of spiritual formation. Peter asserts that Christ suffered, “leaving you an example so that you might follow in his steps” (1 Peter 2:21). Paul implores Christians to follow the example of others as they follow Christ (1 Corinthians 4:16, Philippians 3:14). So important is the example that Christians set, that Sheldon (1899) stated, “No man can tell until he is moved
by the Divine Spirit what he may do, or how he may change the current of a lifetime of fixed habits of thought and speech and action” (p. 10). The highest level of spiritual development is inspired by the influence that teaching leaders have on their followers (Bredfeldt, 2006). The presence of God in the life of the believer will affect not only the individual believer but also that of others. Without question, believers should imitate the life of Christ and walk in His steps.

Spiritual formation is something for which every Christian must strive. Although limited growth may occur in private, genuine spiritual formation takes place in a community under the leadership of a godly servant leader (Ephesians 4:12-13).

**Measurement of Spiritual Formation.** The Bible provides guidance for the process and evidence of spiritual formation (Ephesians 4:11-13; Galatians 5:22-23). Despite the biblical guidance, spiritual formation can be difficult to quantify. Stuckenschneider (2017) defined formation as "a way of developing some trait of quality through formal instruction and supervision, independent practice and efforts, or a combination of methods” (p. 9). In other words, spiritual formation is something that is taught and learned through various formal and informal methods.

In 1993 Benson et al. designed the Faith Maturity Scale (FMS) and it has since become the most commonly used instrument to measure spiritual formation. The FMS is used to measure the spiritual formation of a faith community in terms of the following eight dimensions of spiritual maturity:

1. Trusts in God’s saving grace and believes firmly in the humanity and divinity of Jesus;

2. Experiences a sense of personal well-being, security, and peace;

3. Integrates faith and life, seeing work, family, social relationships, and political choices
as part of one’s religious life;

4. Seeks spiritual growth through study, reflection, prayer, and discussion with others;

5. Seeks to be a part of a community of believers in which people give witness to their faith and support and nourish one another;

6. Holds life-affirming values, including a commitment to racial and gender equality, an affirmation of cultural and religious diversity, and a personal sense of responsibility for the welfare of others;

7. Advocates social and global change to bring about social justice; and

8. Serves humanity, consistently and passionately, through acts of love and justice (Benson et al., 1993, p. 6).

The FMS is designed for respondents’ self-rated inputs and presents vertical and horizontal subscales. These scales indicate the individual’s faith concerning his love for God (vertical) and love for his neighbor (horizontal) (Benson et al., 1993).

**Related Literature**

The literature review unmistakably reveals the theological and theoretical foundations of servant leadership and spiritual formation. However, the relationship between the two has received little to no direct exploration. Literature older than five years were included in the study of theological and theoretical frameworks as it presents significant information necessary for a clear understanding of servant leadership and spiritual formation. However, in this section, only materials from the past six years have been included to emphasize the relevance of the current lack of related literature.
Servant Leadership

Thus far this literature review has clearly shown the theological and theoretical basis for servant leadership. In addition to the biblical and theoretical basis, the study of this discipline continues to be an ongoing exercise. A large amount of recent literature related to servant leadership is examined in the following pages.

Leadership Development. In the past five years, there have been numerous books, articles, and dissertations published concerning servant leadership. Many of these studies are focused on leadership development (Anderson, 2015; Bloom, 2017; Myung, 2014; Piper, 2018; Piwowarski, 2019; Rowland, 2015). Research reveals that there are numerous servant leadership models with varying characteristics, however, a majority of them are based on an external application of certain principles, rather than an intrinsic desire to serve others (Myung). Servant leadership requires more than learning a style or method to be imitated, rather it begins with the inner motivation of the heart (Anderson).

There is a strong connection between the gospel and the development of servant leaders (Anderson, 2015). Paul’s Epistle to the Philippians offers a biblically sound servant leadership model that encompasses both internal and external precepts of being and doing (Myung, 2014).

In terms of leadership development, there is no better example than that of Jesus Christ, as He provides the supreme example of servant leadership. Using scriptural support, Bloom (2017) asserts that there are five marks of a servant leader. The first is that the leader continually seeks the glory of God rather than glory for themself. The second is that the servant leader sacrifices to obtain happiness for those he or she serves. Third, the leader will hold the message of the gospel to a higher place than his or her wants, needs, rights, or desires. Fourth, a servant
leader is humble and avoids personal recognition. Finally, he or she understands that they must decrease so Christ and His message may increase (Bloom).

**Focus on the Follower.** Other studies concerning servant leadership focus on followership and their perception of the effectiveness of the leader (Irving & Berndt, 2017; Keith, 2017; Lemoine, 2017; Tischler, Giambatista, McKeage, & McCormick, 2016). The goal of servant leadership is to influence and motivate people through role modeling rather than coercion. Servant leaders place the follower’s well being above their own and will focus on their development (Lemoine).

A study in a large American healthcare organization examining the effect of servant leadership purposefulness and goal orientation’s effect on the leader follower-focus revealed a statistically significant positive correlation between sixteen variables (Irving & Berndt, 2017). This adds further support to the impact servant leadership can have on followers.

Keith (2017) asserts that servant leadership is effective due to the application of seven key practices that focus on followers. The first is self-awareness since a leader will not be effective if he or she is not aware of what influence they have on others. The next key practice is that of effective listening, for this is the only way they will be able to identify the needs and concerns of others. The third element is to change the pyramid, meaning that instead of the classical model of having the leader at the top, servant leaders are at the bottom and those that they lead are at the top. Fourth, developing others is an essential element of servant leadership. The fifth element is that a servant leader will coach those that he or she leads, rather than try and control them. Sixth, a servant leader will unleash the energy and intelligence of others by encouraging them to make contributions to the mission. The final key element is that of
foresight. Servant leaders will look ahead and chart a path of success and steer the people and organization away from potential problems (Keith).

Tischler et al. (2016) observe that there exists a predictive relationship between servant leadership and core self-evaluation, which is a predictor of job satisfaction. This confirms previous research in this area and speaks directly to the viability of servant leadership as a method that inspires follower satisfaction, growth, development, and productivity (Tischler et al.). This provides further evidence of the efficacy of servant leadership and supports the expectation that it may have a positive impact on spiritual formation.

**Spiritual Formation**

Similar to servant leadership studies that focus on leadership development, numerous current studies on spiritual formation emphasize the importance of spiritual formation for those in leadership positions (Bracken et al., 2016; Equizabla, 2018; Piwowarski, 2019; Stukenschnieder, 2017). Two studies on the formation of spiritual leadership of Catholic school principals reveal a desire for leadership and ongoing continual spiritual formation are essential qualities for spiritual leaders. They reveal that the principal has a direct influence on the spiritual formation of other leaders and faculty members (Piwowarski; Stukenschnieder).

Bracken et al. (2016) in their study also focus on the spiritual formation of Catholic educational ministry leaders. This study asserts that before educational ministry leaders can adequately affect the spiritual formation of their students, they must be on a progressive path of self-spiritual growth. Specifically, the educator must possess a “mature spirituality, expressed in a profound Christian life” (Bracken et al., p. 7). This certainly supports Paul’s advice for the qualifications of elders, overseers, and deacons as found in 1 Timothy 3:1-13 and Titus 1:5-9). All three studies emphasize the importance of the spiritual formation of ministry and educational
leaders. However, none provides substantial research concerning the spiritual leaders’ effectiveness at contributing to the spiritual formation of the students (Bracken, et al; Piwowarski, 2019; Stukenschneider, 2017).

An additional study by Eguizabla (2018) examines the spiritual formation of Latino Protestant believers in American churches but does not heavily consider the effect that leadership has on their spiritual formation.

**Rationale for Study and Gap in the Literature**

There has been an exhaustive amount of literature produced concerning the study of servant leadership as a single focus. Furthermore, there are various studies regarding the spiritual formation of individuals and congregations, but there is little research that shows its relationship with servant leadership (Akerlund, 2016; Johnson, 2017; Varnado, 2018, Yukl, 2013). Despite the limited availability of research concerning the consequences of servant leadership, several studies identify positive outcomes such as improved commitment, self-efficacy, and socially responsible behavior (Yukl).

One encouraging study concerns the impact of servant leadership on the spiritual efficacy of followers (Johnson, 2017). The researcher employed a qualitative research method and used open-ended questions to determine spiritual self-efficacy, so understanding how the answers were coded and tabulated was somewhat challenging. The study reveals a positive correlation in 75% of the areas concerning servant leadership and spiritual self-efficacy. The researcher’s definition of spiritual self-efficacy is closely linked to spiritual formation (Johnson). Johnson’s study is a very useful resource for comparative research, however, similar studies are limited. Therefore, an existing research gap regarding the relationship between servant leadership and spiritual formation compels the need for further study.
**Partially Inadequate Studies**

Following are some examples of studies that are related to the study of the relationship between servant leadership and spiritual formation, yet fail to properly or fully address the relationship in one or more specific areas.

One hopeful study by Akerlund (2016) is directly related to this subject and concerns the relationship between leadership and spiritual formation. The researcher focuses on how the Apostle Paul uses 1 Thessalonians 2:1-12 to show his goal and method of leadership to enhance the spiritual formation of the community of believers. Furthermore, Paul uses this passage to drive home the point that spiritual formation occurs best within the community. However, the researcher does not state specifically which type of leadership is necessary, nor does he provide any experimental or observed substantiation for increased spiritual formation beyond what is already covered in the above theological and theoretical frameworks (Akerlund).

A study by Heinz (2017) that is related to this area assesses the relationship between lead pastor servant leadership and organizational commitment of church members. In Hebrews 10:24-25 Paul exhorts Christians, “let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together.” S. Lowe and M. Lowe (2018) note that New Testament believers are expected to exhibit a reciprocal behavior of commitment to each other. These observations indicate that spiritually mature Christians should normally demonstrate a willful commitment to a local church or assembly of believers through regular attendance. Heinz’s study suggests a "significant positive correlation between... servant leadership and affective commitment" (p. iv). This provides valuable insight because organizational commitment could be considered as a component included in the FMS where an indication of spiritual formation is one who “seeks to be a part of a community of believers in which people give witness to their
faith and support and nourish one another” (Benson et al., 1993, p. 6).

An additional study identifies a positive correlation between spiritual leadership and spiritual well-being (Mehdinezhad & Nouri, 2016). In this work, the researchers loosely define spiritual leadership as a combination of transformational and servant leadership, despite the differences between the two as noted in the theoretical framework. Although well-being is a component of spiritual formation, spiritual well-being as used in this study has more to do with a feeling or sense of wholeness and wellness, than with spiritual formation as characterized in the theological and theoretical frameworks (Mehdinezhad & Nouri).

Due to a similar focus on resulting spiritual formation, studies concerning the relationship between transformational leadership and spiritual formation were also considered. One study comparing the relationship between senior pastors transformational leadership and parishioners’ spiritual development found a positive correlation in three of the five subject areas (Varnado, 2018). Despite differences in leadership style, this study provides substantiation for the premise that leadership can have a positive impact on spiritual formation. Although helpful, this study does not address the relationship between servant leadership and spiritual formation, which will be addressed with this current study.

Several studies measure the relationship between servant leadership and formation focusing on leadership's association with student performance (Crabtree, 2014; Vanderbilt, 2017). For example, a southwest Virginia study finds servant leadership to have a positive correlation with improved reading achievement scores, but no other significant impact on student achievement or development (Crabtree). Instead of churning out students in an assembly line fashion, Christian educational institutions have the opportunity and responsibility to disciple students and provide them with a quality education with a biblical worldview. Principles and
teachers can promote this process by adopting the servant leadership model as demonstrated in Scripture (Vanderbilt).

**Profile of the Current Study**

The rationale for the study is driven by the gap in the literature concerning the overall lack of literature that focuses on the relationship between servant leadership and spiritual formation. The related literature, rationale for the study, and gap in the literature reveal a considerable amount of research has been done in the areas of servant leadership and spiritual formation. However, this literature review demonstrates that the bulk of servant leadership studies related to spiritual formation primarily focus on leadership development or a focus on the follower, but not necessarily follower spiritual formation. This review also suggests that literature related to spiritual formation has numerous concerns, but mainly concentrates on the spiritual development of those in leadership positions. Many studies are pertinent to the study of the relationship between servant leadership and spiritual formation, yet fail to properly or fully address the relationship in one or more specific areas.

Despite the existence of numerous studies concerning servant leadership and spiritual formation, few explore the direct relationship between the two (Akerlund, 2016; Johnson, 2017; Varnado, 2018, Yukl, 2013). This current study sought to minimize this gap and contribute to the body of knowledge in the field of pastoral servant leadership and congregational spiritual formation.
CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The context of this study was to assess possible relationships between pastoral servant leadership and congregational spiritual formation. The population of churches used for this study was Protestant churches located within the United States of America.

Research Design Synopsis

The Problem

Effective church leadership is critical in the spiritual formation of the members, growth of the church, and the effectiveness of the church in reaching the local community. This focus on leadership is based on the predominant belief that it involves “influence toward goals, which implies that leadership ought to have a direct impact on organizational performance or some sort of outcome” (Ledbetter et al., 2016, p. 20). Leadership methods based on one of the four models of authentic, charismatic, transactional, and transformational possess strengths, but their inherent weaknesses inevitably fail to deliver over the long haul. Therefore, a clear gap exists between the predominant leadership theories and the requirement for sustained results. Biblical servant leadership is offered to fill this gap. A proper biblical understanding of leadership is required if Christian leaders are to shepherd God’s people in a way that is commensurate with the example of Scripture.

One of the more popular methods in contemporary use is servant leadership. Servant leadership is generally defined as “the care taken by the servant first to make sure that other people’s highest priority needs are being served” (Greenleaf, 2008, p. 16). This style of leadership aims to meet the needs of those being served ahead of the needs of the leader. The theory guiding this study was developed in 1970 by Robert K. Greenleaf in his short essay titled The Servant as Leader and placed in its proper biblical perspective by Gary Bredfeldt.
Genuine biblical servant leadership “at the core must be a commitment to the Scriptures as authority over all of life, including the personal life and character of the leader-teacher” (Bredfeldt, 2006, p. 97).

The goal of this research was to determine if pastoral servant leadership has a positive relationship with congregational spiritual formation in Protestant churches throughout the United States. Pastors were administered the Self Assessment of Servant Leadership (SASL) survey to determine their type of leadership. Congregational members were administered the Faith Maturity Scale (FMS) survey to determine the individual’s faith concerning his love for God (vertical) and love for his neighbor (horizontal) (Benson et al., 1993).

**Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this correlational study was to determine if a relationship exists between pastoral servant leadership and congregational spiritual formation in Protestant churches within the United States of America. Servant leadership is generally defined as “The care taken by the servant first to make sure that other people’s highest priority needs are being served” (Greenleaf, 2008, p. 16). Spiritual formation is generally defined as “An intentional, multifaceted process which promotes the transformation by which Christ is formed in us so that we can become His continually maturing disciples” (Gangel & Wilhoit, 1994, p. 16).

**Research Questions and Hypotheses**

**Research Questions.** The following research questions guide this study:

**RQ1.** What proportion of pastors within the sample group employ servant leadership as measured by the SASL?

**RQ2.** What relationship, if any, exists between pastoral servant leadership and congregational members’ love for God as measured by the FMS?

**RQ3.** What relationship, if any, exists between pastoral servant leadership and congregational members’ love for their neighbor as measured by the FMS?
RQ4. What relationship, if any, exists between pastoral servant leadership and spiritual formation of congregational members as measured by the FMS?

Research Hypotheses. The null hypotheses for this study are:

H₀₁: There is no statistically significant number of pastors practicing servant leadership within the sample group.

H₀₂: There is no statistical correlation between a pastor’s servant leadership behavior and congregational members’ love for God.

H₀₃: There is no statistical correlation between a pastor’s servant leadership behavior and congregational members’ love for their neighbor.

H₀₄: There is no statistical correlation between a pastor’s servant leadership behavior and congregational members’ spiritual formation.

Research Design and Methodology

The methodological research design for this study was a quantitative non-exploratory correlational approach, which is used to "describe and measure the degree of association (or relationship) between two or more variables or sets of scores" (Creswell, 2018, p. 50). This study collected quantitative data with regards to pastoral servant leadership behavior and test its relationship with congregational spiritual formation. Pastors were administered the SASL survey to determine their type of leadership. Congregational members were administered the FMS survey to determine the individual’s faith concerning their love for God (vertical) and love for their neighbor (horizontal) (Benson et al., 1993). A non-experimental, correlational approach was selected as it is appropriate for “measuring variables and testing relationships between variables and testing relationships between variables in order to reveal . . . correlations” (Leavy, 2017, p. 40).

The primary independent variable was the servant leadership behavior of ministerial leadership. The Pastors’ style and level of leadership were gathered by way of the SASL
questionnaire administered via the Survey Monkey online platform. This self-reporting tool was adapted from Page and Wong’s (2000) Self Assessment of Servant Leadership Profile (SASLP) by Dr. Tim Taylor in 2002. The SASLP was created to develop a “conceptual framework for assessing servant-leadership” (Page & Wong, p. 69). The SASL is a 24-item self-assessment survey that measures servant leadership behaviors and characteristics (Taylor, 2002).

The primary dependent variable was the spiritual formation of congregational members. Congregational members were administered the FMS survey via the Survey Monkey online platform to determine the individual’s faith concerning his love for God (vertical) and love for his neighbor (horizontal) (Benson et al., 1993). The FMS is a 38-question survey that measures spiritual formation in eight core areas that measure the participant’s trust and belief, the experience of the fruits of faith, integration of faith and life, seeking spiritual growth, experience and nurture the faith community, holds life-affirming values, advocates social change, and acts and serves (Benson et al.).

The collected data were analyzed using the statistical computer program SPSS version 26. A quantitative approach was appropriate because this study collected quantitative data via surveys that provided a numeric description of “trends, attitudes, or opinions of a population by studying a sample of that population” (Creswell, 2018, p. 50).

**Population**

The target population for this study consisted of pastors and congregational members from Protestant churches of various denominations throughout the United States as listed in the USA Churches (2019) online database and also from Baptist Associations located within Arkansas, California, and Hawaii. USA Churches is an independent Christian service that provides a directory of a broad range of evangelical churches from various denominations. USA
Churches is not affiliated with any specific church organization or denomination. It is dedicated to helping people connect with local churches throughout the United States. The directory is updated several times weekly as churches request to be added to the database.

Although the USA Churches database is sortable through the use of various filters, for the initial phase of this study the only specified criteria applied was for that of small churches with an average weekend attendance of 50 or fewer people. No other restricted criterion was applied. Pastors and congregants must have had at least one year of experience in their current church and must be of the age of 18 years or older to participate in this study. This study was not restricted to a specific denomination since the research focused on the relationship between pastoral servant leadership and congregational spiritual formation.

The initial group of 350 churches from the USA Churches database did not produce an acceptable return rate. Therefore, the researcher requested IRB approval to incorporate churches of all sizes and increase the population to include 300 churches from Baptist Associations located within Arkansas, California, and Hawaii. Upon IRB approval the researcher contacted the Executive Directors of these associations and enlisted their assistance in contacting member churches. Additionally, the researcher also performed follow up contact with churches from the USA Churches database who had originally declined to participate.

**Sampling Procedures**

The sampling method for the USA Churches population was systematic sampling, as it may “have precision-equivalent random sampling” (Creswell, 2018, p. 257). Of the 3,297 small churches listed in the USA Churches database, the researcher systematically selected 350 churches to contact. Since this study was composed of churches from across the geographic, denominational, and ethnic spectrum, stratification based on gender, age,
denomination, and other factors were not applied.

A nonprobability or convenience sampling strategy was applied for the population consisting of Baptist Associations from Arkansas, California, and Hawaii. This strategy was selected due to the “convenience and availability” of respondence and willingness of the various Executive Directors to contact their member churches (Creswell, 2018).

The sample size was determined through the use of the “Creative Research Systems” sample size calculator using a confidence level of .95 and a confidence interval of 5. The researcher added the two populations (USA Churches and Baptist Associations) together to determine the desired sample size. A total of 650 churches were contacted with a total attendance of 49,000 congregants. The desired size of the population consisted of 242 pastors and 381 parishioners from churches of various Protestant denominations located in every state within the United States of America. A total of 251 pastors and 741 parishioners answered the surveys.

**Limits of Generalization**

A single research study cannot cover every possible circumstance due to certain limitations. Therefore, this section outlining the delimitations of the research "clarifies the boundaries" of the study (Roberts, 2010, p. 156). The research study and its findings were limited to Protestant churches located in the United States of America. Churches outside this country were excluded from data collection. Non-Protestant groups and those belonging to other religions were excluded from data collection.

This study included various Protestant denominations, which limited a denominationally specific focus. Although this study incorporated various denominations and ethnicities, it was limited to only English speaking participants.
The research was limited by the use of only one measure of servant leadership, the SASL. Similarly, the measure of spiritual formation was limited to the use of the FMS. No other instruments or methods were utilized to collect data for these areas. Furthermore, the SASL and FMS surveys are limited by the readiness of the participants to perform an honest self-assessment. Participant perceptions of predetermined outcomes and concern for lack of confidentiality could also have limited the veracity of their responses and limited the effectiveness of this data collection instrument. No controlling variables were employed since correlational research seeks to examine relationships.

**Ethical Considerations**

Anticipating ethical issues that may arise during the research process is an integral part of performing a study. Creswell (2018) notes, “Researchers need to protect their research participants; develop a trust with them; promote the integrity of research; guard against misconduct and impropriety that might reflect on their organizations or institutions” (pp. 159-160). To mitigate risk, the researcher communicated the information about the study in a manner that was easily understood by participants.

The research design and methodology did not pose major ethical issues beyond the requirement for confidentiality. Assurances were provided to prospective participants that their privacy and confidentiality would not be compromised through disclosure of names and other personally-identifying information. Furthermore, it was established that participation in the study was voluntary and there would be no penalty for nonparticipation.

Participants were afforded protection through informed consent forms outlining these and other ethical issues. These were electronically provided for pastoral participants to review and sign before continuing with the quantitative surveys. Informed consent forms were provided for
congregational participants to review before continuing with the quantitative survey, however, no signature was required as they were completely anonymous. The researcher employed honesty and integrity during research, data collection, data analysis, and reporting phases of the study. Data collected was electronically encrypted and not stored on a cloud to add further protection from unauthorized disclosure. Finally, Institutional Review Board review and approval were obtained before conducting the study and collection of any data.

**Instrumentation**

The methodological research design for this researcher’s study was a quantitative non-exploratory correlational approach, which is used to “describe and measure the degree of association (or relationship) between two or more variables or sets of scores” (Creswell, 2018, p. 50). This study collected quantitative data with regards to pastoral servant leadership behavior and tested its relationship with congregational spiritual formation. A non-experimental, correlational approach was selected as it is appropriate for “measuring variables and testing relationships between variables and testing relationships between variables in order to reveal . . . correlations” (Leavy, 2017, p. 39).

The primary independent variable was pastoral servant leadership. The participants’ style and level of leadership were gathered by way of the SASL questionnaire administered via the Survey Monkey online platform. This self-reporting tool was developed by Dr. Tim Taylor in 2002 and adapted from Page and Wong’s (2000) SASLP. The SASLP was created to develop a “conceptual framework for assessing servant-leadership” (Page & Wong). The SASLP consists of a 99-question survey covering 12 core areas using a seven-point Likert scale that ranges from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree. Responses are graded as follows: Strongly Agree = 7,
Agree = 6, Mildly Agree = 5, Undecided = 4, Mildly Disagree = 3, Disagree = 2, and Strongly Disagree = 1 (Page & Wong).

Taylor (2002) developed the SASL to measure servant leadership behaviors and characteristics with a less cumbersome instrument. He reduced Page and Wong’s (2000) 99-item assessment to a 24-item self-assessment survey, but still maintained unity with the 12 core characteristics of the SASLP. The SASL consists of 24 questions and uses a seven-point Likert scale that ranges from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree. Responses are graded as follows: Strongly Agree = 7, Agree = 6, Mildly Agree = 5, Undecided = 4, Mildly Disagree = 3, Disagree = 2, and Strongly Disagree = 1.

For this current study, the SASL utilized the original 24 questions with the 7-point Likert scale as described above. Likert responses were combined into a composite inventory score ranging from 24 to 168 points. A score of 24 points was the lowest possible score on this 24-question inventory, and a score of 168 points is the highest possible score. A score of 24 was interpreted to mean that the respondent possesses a low degree of servant leadership characteristics whereas, a score of 168 was interpreted to mean that the respondent possesses a high degree of servant leadership characteristics.

The SASL was developed to measure descriptors of servant leadership that fall into twelve distinct categories of integrity, humility, servanthood, caring for others, empowering others, developing others, visioning, goal setting, leading, modeling, team building, and shared decision making (Taylor, 2002). The unique characteristics that define biblical servant leadership concern a God-focused approach with a commitment to “study, prayer, modeling, discipling, preaching, teaching, and equipping the saints for ministry” (Means, 1989, pp. 53-54). Although these are not specifically measured by the SASL, there is overlap in the areas of modeling,
discipling, teaching, and equipping others. Furthermore, the twelve elements of servant leadership measured by the SASL are common to both secular and biblical servant leadership models. Thus, this instrument was deemed appropriate for use in this current study.

The primary dependent variable was congregational spiritual formation. Congregational members were administered the Faith Maturity Scale (FMS) survey via the Survey Monkey online platform to determine the individual’s faith concerning his love for God (vertical) and love for his neighbor (horizontal) (Benson et al., 1993). The FMS is a 38-question survey that measures spiritual formation in eight core areas that measure the participant's trust and belief, the experience of the fruits of faith, integration of faith and life, seeking spiritual growth, experience and nurture the faith community, holds life-affirming values, advocates social change, and acts and serves. The FMS uses a 7-point Likert scale for respondents to use when answering the questions. The responses range from: Always True = 7, Almost Always True = 6, Often True = 5, Sometimes True = 4, True Once in a While = 3, Rarely True = 2, and Never True = 1.

“The FMS is scored as the mean of the 38 items; its potential range is 1 to 7” (Benson et al., 1993, p. 12). Benson, et al. assert that spiritual maturity occurs along a continuum. Thus, they developed the FMS with two subscales. A vertical subscale that measures a respondent’s faith concerning love for God, and a horizontal subscale that measures the respondent’s love for neighbor (Benson et al.). The vertical subscale score is determined by the mean score of questions 3, 7, 9, 11, 14, 15, 19, 24, 31, 34, 36, and 38. Whereas the horizontal subscale score is determined by the mean of questions 1, 6, 8, 13, 16, 18, 21, 22, 28, 29, 33, and 37 (Benson et al.). The resulting scores of these questions along the continuum reveal a four-fold typology of faith maturity, "analogous to that employed in research concerning intrinsic and extrinsic
religiousness" (Benson, et al., p. 18). A high score is determined as one that exceeds the median for each scale. Table 1 below reveals this four-fold typology (Benson et al., p. 18):

**Table 1**

*Typology of Faith Maturity*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Faith Dimension</th>
<th>Vertical Dimension</th>
<th>Horizontal Dimension</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Undeveloped</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horizontal</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vertical</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrated</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An individual who scored low in both the vertical and horizontal dimensions is considered to have an undeveloped faith. A respondent who scored high in both the vertical and horizontal dimensions is considered to have an integrated or mature faith (Benson, et al., 1993).

This researcher received permission from the developers of the SASL and FMS to utilize these instruments in the data collection process (APPENDIX B and APPENDIX C). The data collected from the SPSS and FMS were analyzed using the statistical computer program SPSS version 26 and findings were published in this dissertation.

**Validity and Reliability**

Validity is the extent to which an assessment instrument “yields accurate information about the characteristic it is intended to assess and thereby enables justifiable inferences about that characteristic” (Leedy & Ormrod, 2018, p. 421). The SASL and FMS have both produced high levels of validity and reliability in pilot and actual studies.

The SASL and its predecessor the SASLP from which it was derived, have demonstrated high degrees of validity and reliability. A pilot study using the SASLP was performed by Page and Wong (1998) and produced a Cronbach alpha reliability score of .94. Hamilton (1999) utilized the SASLP in a study of servant leadership and discovered a Cronbach alpha score of .77
Valdez, 2009). After developing the SASL based on the SASLP, Taylor (2002) performed a comparative analysis between the 99-item SASLP and the 24-item SALS and found “a positive correlation of .95 with the total score of both test . . . (and) an alpha reliability score of .96 for the original 99-item instrument and .92 for the new 24-item instrument” (p.83). Crabtree (2014) utilized the SASL in his study, which returned a Cronbach alpha reliability score of .88. The SASL has statistically proven validity and shown to be a reliable instrument for measuring servant leadership characteristics and has been employed in numerous studies other on servant leadership (Alfieri, 2009; Milligan, 2003; Valdez).

The designers of the FMS show that "considerable evidence supports the validity of the scale" (Benson et al., 1993, p. 13). The FMS is the instrument of choice for this researcher’s study for several reasons. The survey was initially designed and employed in a national study of six Protestant denominations (Benson et al.). This cross-denominational design is ideal for this current study as it is not confined to one particular denomination. Its development involved considerable input from three panels of clergy, denominational experts, and seminary scholars who assessed the construct validity through "known groups, expert raters, its relation to the age of the respondent, and its relation to other measures" (Benson et al., p. 13).

In the original study for which the FMS was designed the researchers discovered, “Scale reliabilities (Cronbach’s alpha) for the Faith Maturity Scale are robust across age, gender, respondent type, and denomination” (Benson et al., 1993, p. 13).

A sizeable amount of research has been accomplished utilizing the instrument since its inception, which has added to its validity. The FMS has been used in numerous studies concerning spiritual maturity and has proven to have a high degree of reliability (Edge, 2013; Skinner, 2010; Varnado, 2018).
Varnado (2018) administered the FMS via an online software portal called Transform to 3,212 parishioners from 89 churches and received a 45.3% response rate. The findings were broken down into four demographics of gender, age, church membership tenure, and spiritual age since conversion (Varnado). This allowed the researcher to employ the data in a manner that gave the best indication of spiritual maturity concerning transformational leadership. The study indicated that one subset of pastors had a statistically significant impact on spiritual maturity scores (Varnado).

**Research Procedures**

Quantitative research typically employs two main types of data collection processes: experimental research and survey research. Experimental research seeks to ascertain whether a specific variable influences the outcome of the experiment. Correlational studies explore the relationship between variables but do not seek to determine cause and effect (Leedy & Ormrod, 2018).

This current study employed survey research. Survey research is “the most widely used quantitative design in the social sciences” (Leavy, 2017, p. 203). It is used for non-exploratory studies and provides the researcher with a numeric description of “trends, attitudes, or opinions of a population by studying a sample of that population” (Creswell, 2018, pp. 36-37). The questions can be specifically designed to test hypotheses and answer research questions. Surveys can be delivered in-person, by mail, online, or by telephone and are an easy way for the researcher to gather specific data from a large population in a relatively short time (Leavy). For this current study, the researcher chose to administer the surveys via the Survey Monkey online platform.
Following approval from Liberty University’s IRB (APPENDIX A), pastors from each of the 350 systematically selected churches from the USA Churches database were sent a recruitment email with information regarding the study, a request to forward an attached recruitment e-mail to their congregants, and a link to an online survey site known as Survey Monkey (APPENDIX D). An informed consent document was the first page the respondent saw after clicking on the survey link (APPENDIX E). Pastors were required to “electronically sign” the informed consent document by typing their name and date. The respondent was not able to proceed with the SASL until he or she acknowledged that they have read and understood the information in the consent by typing their name and date. This allowed the pastor to enter his church code and continue with the SASL. Pastoral responses were confidential and the researcher received all the data from the survey site with only a code designating the church of the respondents. The coded church name was not included in data analysis, findings, or report, and only used in correlating pastoral servant leadership with the congregational spiritual formation of the pastor’s members.

Pastors who consented to participate were also requested to forward a recruitment email to all congregational members with information regarding the study and a link to an online survey site known as Survey Monkey (APPENDIX F). An informed consent document was the first page the congregational respondent saw after clicking on the survey link (APPENDIX G). A signature was not required on the informed consent document for congregational respondents as the FMS was an anonymous survey. However, the respondent was not able to proceed with the FMS until he or she acknowledged that they had read and understood the information in the consent by clicking on the appropriate button at the bottom of the page. Clicking on this button allowed the respondent to enter his or her church code and continue with the FMS. Responses
were anonymous and the researcher received all the data from the survey site with only a code designating the church of the respondents. The coded church name was not included in data analysis, findings, or report, and only used in correlating pastoral servant leadership with the congregational spiritual formation of the pastor’s members.

An inadequate return rate from the initial recruitment process drove a Change in Protocol request with Liberty University’s IRB to expand the study to include churches of all sizes and add churches from several Baptist Associations located in Arkansas, California, and Hawaii to the population. Following IRB approval for a Change in Protocol (APPENDIX H), Executive Directors of the Baptist Associations were asked to forward the Pastoral recruitment e-mail (and attached Congregational recruitment e-mail) to their member churches with the same procedures as outlined above.

**Data Analysis and Statistical Procedures**

Correlational studies seek to determine whether two or more variables are related to one another. The statistic that results from this test is called a correlation coefficient and tells the researcher the direction and strength of the association (Leedy & Ormrod, 2018). The direction indicates whether there is a positive or negative correlation. In a positive correlation, when one variable increases the other also increases. In a negative correlation, when one variable increases, the other decreases. The strength of the relationship is denoted by the size of the correlation coefficient. A perfect correlation is +1 or -1. Leedy and Ormrod explain, “If we know the degree to which one characteristic is present, we know exactly how much of the other characteristic exists” (p. 324). A strong correlation is indicated by a correlation close to +1 or -1. The closer the correlation coefficient is to +1 or -1 permits the researcher to more accurately predict the level of the dependent variable in relation to the independent variable (Leedy & Ormrod).
Data Analysis

The researcher received all the data from the Survey Monkey site with only a code designating the pastors’ and parishioner’s respective churches. All data were analyzed through the use of SPSS statistical software version 26. The population for this study consisted of responding pastors and parishioners from the USA Churches database and also Baptist Associations located in Arkansas, California, Hawaii. SASL and FMS data were analyzed for all pastors and all parishioners surveyed.

SASL scores were analyzed to determine the means, standard deviation, skewness, and kurtosis. In accordance with Taylor’s (2002) original procedure, SASL scores were ranked on a continuum from highest to lowest, and a median split was identified. Pastors who scored themselves above the median split were identified as exhibiting strong servant leadership behaviors. This addressed RQ1: What proportion of pastors within the sample group employ servant leadership?

Data from congregational members’ scores on the vertical scale of the FMS were analyzed against their pastor’s SASL to address RQ2: What relationship, if any, exists between pastoral servant leadership and congregational members’ love for God as measured by the FMS?

Data from congregational members’ scores on the horizontal scale of the FMS were analyzed against their pastor’s SASL to address RQ3: What relationship, if any, exists between pastoral servant leadership and congregational members’ love for their neighbor as measured by the FMS?

Data on congregational members’ overall scores from the FMS were compiled and compared to their pastors’ SASL. This addressed RQ4: What relationship, if any, exists between
pastoral servant leadership and spiritual formation of congregational members as measured by the FMS?

**Statistical Procedures**

Data was collected via Survey Monkey online platform and analyzed through the use of SPSS statistical software version 26. The statistical procedure initially chosen for this study was the Pearson Product Moment Correlation (or Pearson r). This statistical procedure is typically used for determining the correlation between two variables having continuous data with a linear relationship. For a positive correlation, both variables increase simultaneously. For a negative correlation, as one variable increases the other decreases (Leedy & Ormrod, 2018).

In this current study, the data was collected through the online survey instruments was continuous data. Therefore the use of Pearson r was justified. Although Pearson r is the most widely used statistic in determining correlation, “the nature of the data governs the correlational procedure that is appropriate for those data” (Leedy & Ormrod, 2018, p. 326).

To ensure Pearson r was the appropriate procedure, assumptions testing was performed on the data. The results of the assumptions testing revealed that the variables violated assumptions associated with the Pearson r correlation technique. Additionally, homoscedasticity could not be confirmed with the SASL data. Therefore the researcher chose to use Spearman’s rank-order correlation (Spearman’s rho) which is suitable when both variables “involve rank-ordered data and are ordinal in nature” (Leedy & Ormrod, 2018, p. 232).

Quantitative studies normally have one or more hypotheses as is the case with this current study. Therefore a Null Hypothesis Significance Test (NHST) or statistical significance test was performed to test the null hypothesis, which states that no relationship exists between the variables. Leavy (2017) explains, “you test the null hypothesis in order to avoid a Type I error. A
Type I error occurs when you infer that a relationship exists that does not exist” (p. 224). The resulting probability or “p-value” should be less than .05. If it is larger, then the researcher should not infer that there is an existing relationship between variables.

**Chapter Summary**

Effective church leadership is critical to the spiritual formation of the members, the growth of the church, and the effectiveness of the church in reaching the local community. Ephesians 4:11-13 sets forth the purpose of leadership as being spiritual formation. The Scriptures provide an unmistakable basis for servant leadership to fill this requirement. The research methodology for the current study was based on the need is to assess possible relationships between pastoral servant leadership and congregational spiritual growth. The population of churches used for this study was comprised of Protestant churches of various denominations from across the United States of America.

The methodological research design for this study was a quantitative non-exploratory correlational approach and collected quantitative data with regards to pastoral servant leadership behavior and tested its relationship with congregational spiritual formation. The instrumentation for this study consisted of the SASL and FMS which have proven validity and reliability. Finally, data analysis and statistical procedures using SPSS version 26 were performed to analyze the data and address each of the research questions. The following chapter will discuss the analysis of the data and the findings.
CHAPTER FOUR: ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

Overview

The purpose of this study was to determine if a relationship exists between pastoral servant leadership and congregational spiritual formation in Protestant churches located within the United States. This chapter provides the results and findings of the data analysis beginning with a review of the compilation protocol and measure, followed by demographic and sample data, analysis and findings of the data, and concludes with an evaluation of the research design.

Research Questions

RQ1. What proportion of pastors within the sample group employ servant leadership as measured by the SASL?

RQ2. What relationship, if any, exists between pastoral servant leadership and congregational members’ love for God as measured by the FMS?

RQ3. What relationship, if any, exists between pastoral servant leadership and congregational members’ love for their neighbor as measured by the FMS?

RQ4. What relationship, if any, exists between pastoral servant leadership and spiritual formation of congregational members as measured by the FMS?

Hypotheses

H₀₁: There is no statistically significant number of pastors practicing servant leadership within the sample group.

H₀₂: There is no statistical correlation between a pastor’s servant leadership behavior and congregational members’ love for God.

H₀₃: There is no statistical correlation between a pastor’s servant leadership behavior and congregational members’ love for their neighbor.

H₀₄: There is no statistical correlation between a pastor’s servant leadership behavior and congregational members’ spiritual formation.
Compilation Protocol and Measures

The data collection phase for the current study began in September 2019 and concluded in March 2020. The SASL and FMS surveys were administered online using Survey Monkey. A total of 650 recruitment emails were submitted to pastors of Protestant churches across the United States.

An initial population of 350 small churches from the USA Churches database was selected to participate. A total of 350 recruitment emails were sent to pastors systematically selected from the USA Churches database. Each pastoral recruitment email included an attached congregational email for each pastor to forward to their parishioners. The initial six-week deadline yielded a meager response rate of only 5.7% or 20 completed pastoral surveys. This fell far short of the desired minimum of 175 participating churches.

A change in protocol was submitted to Liberty University’s IRB requesting the addition of 300 churches from Baptist Associations located in Arkansas, California, and Hawaii, as well as a request to the study to include churches of all sizes. Following approval from Liberty University’s IRB for a Change in Protocol (APPENDIX H), Pastoral recruitment e-mails (and attached Congregational recruitment e-mail) were sent to the Executive Directors of the Baptist Associations with a request to forward them to their member churches. Additionally, follow up recruitment emails were sent to pastors from the original population of 350 churches from the USA Churches database. This second six-week survey period began in January 2020 and yielded a total response rate of 38.6% or 251 SASL surveys, exceeding the required minimum of 242 pastors. Participating pastors forwarded the FMS recruitment emails to their parishioners, which yielded 741 FMS surveys. The number of FMS responses received were well over the 381
required responses. The data files were compiled and downloaded from the Survey Monkey website and analyzed using SPSS version 26.

Demographic and Sample Data

No demographic or denominational data was collected. Since this study is composed of churches from across the geographic, denominational, and ethnic spectrum, stratification based on gender, age, denomination, and other factors were not applied. The only requirement to participate was an acknowledgment from the participants that they were at least 18 years of age or older, and that pastors and parishioners have a minimum of 1-year at their current church.

The sampling method for the USA Churches population was systematic sampling, as it may “have precision-equivalent random sampling” (Creswell, 2018, p. 257). Of the 3,297 small churches listed in the USA Churches database, the researcher systematically selected 350 churches to contact by choosing every ninth church on the list until the desired total of 350 was achieved (Leavy, 2017, p. 220).

A nonprobability or convenience sampling strategy was applied for the population drawn from Baptist Associations in Arkansas, California, and Hawaii. This strategy was selected due to the “convenience and availability” of churches under the purview of the Executive Directors who agreed to contact their member churches (Creswell, 2018).

The sample size was determined through the use of the “Creative Research Systems” sample size calculator using a confidence level of .95 and a confidence interval of 5. The researcher added the two populations (USA Churches and Baptist Associations) together to determine the desired sample size. A total of 650 churches were contacted with a total attendance of 49,000 congregants. The desired size of the population consisted of 242 pastors and 381 parishioners from churches of various Protestant denominations located in every
state within the United States of America. A total of 251 pastors responded to the SASL and 741 parishioners responded to the FMS surveys.

**Data Analysis and Findings**

**Self Assessment of Servant Leadership**

The primary independent variable was pastoral servant leadership. The participants’ style and level of leadership were gathered by way of the SASL questionnaire administered via the Survey Monkey online platform. The SASL consists of 24 questions and uses a seven-point Likert scale that ranges from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree. Responses are graded as follows: Strongly Agree = 7, Agree = 6, Mildly Agree = 5, Undecided = 4, Mildly Disagree = 3, Disagree = 2, and Strongly Disagree = 1.

For this current study, the SASL utilized the original 24 questions with the 7-point Likert scale as described above. Likert responses were combined into a composite inventory score ranging from 24 to 168 points. A score of 24 points is the lowest possible score on this 24-question inventory, and a score of 168 points is the highest possible score. A score of 24 is interpreted to mean that the respondent possesses a low degree of servant leadership characteristics whereas, a score of 168 is interpreted to mean that the respondent possesses a high degree of servant leadership characteristics. The scores for the 251 pastors who completed the SASL instrument ranged from 126 to 168. Figure 1 shows the distribution of the overall SASL scores.
A descriptive statistics analysis was run on the SASL data in SPSS version 26. Table 2 contains the number of pastors, minimum and maximum scores, the means, standard deviation, skewness, and kurtosis of the overall SASL scores. The mean score of 161.97 suggests that, on average, the vast majority of the respondents scored themselves as exhibiting a high level of servant leadership. Large negative skew values indicate that the preponderance of the distributions was considerably different from normal distributions. This is most likely due to the respondents selecting answers at the higher end of the scale with only a few answering in the lower end. Kurtosis values were also highly positive, demonstrating a higher than expected number of answers in the upper range of each item.
Table 2

*Analysis of Overall SASL Scores*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SASL Scores</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Skewness</th>
<th>Kurtosis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>251</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>161.97</td>
<td>8.180</td>
<td>-2.893</td>
<td>8.205</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A descriptive statistical analysis of each question of the SASL was performed to
determine the questions with the highest and lowest mean scores. Table 3 depicts the two
questions with the highest and the two questions with the lowest mean scores and their standard
deviation. The two questions that had the highest mean scores concerned a pastor’s heart to serve
others and genuine care for those whom they serve. The two questions that had the lowest mean
scores involve placing decision-making in the hands of those who are most affected and
optimizing productivity by matching people with the right job. This indicates that the most
important qualities possessed by strong servant leaders emphasize an attitude of selfless service
and care for others. By contrast, the possession of sound management and participative
leadership skills is not necessarily indicative of a strong servant leader.
Table 3

*High and Low SASL Scores*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(High)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I genuinely care for the welfare of people working with me.</td>
<td>251</td>
<td>6.94</td>
<td>.373</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. I have a heart to serve others.</td>
<td>251</td>
<td>6.93</td>
<td>.427</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Low)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. I try to match people with their jobs in order to optimize productivity.</td>
<td>251</td>
<td>6.09</td>
<td>.607</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. I place the greatest amount of decision-making in the hands of those most affected by the decision.</td>
<td>251</td>
<td>6.05</td>
<td>.733</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

RQ1: What proportion of pastors within the sample group employ servant leadership? In accordance with Taylor’s (2002) original procedure, SASL scores were ranked on a continuum from highest to lowest, and a median split of 164 was identified. 141 of the 251 pastors scored themselves at or above the median split of 164 and were identified as exhibiting strong servant leadership behaviors. According to this analysis, 56% of the pastors were identified as strong servant leaders.

**Faith Maturity Scale**

The primary dependent variable was the spiritual formation of congregational members. Congregational members were administered the Faith Maturity Scale (FMS) survey via the Survey Monkey online platform to determine the individual’s faith concerning his love for God (vertical) and love for his neighbor (horizontal) (Benson et al., 1993). The FMS is a 38-question survey that measures the spiritual formation of the respondents using a 7-point Likert scale. The responses range from: Always True = 7, Almost Always True = 6, Often True = 5, Sometimes True = 4, True Once in a While = 3, Rarely True = 2, and Never True = 1.
“The FMS is scored as the mean of the 38 items; its potential range is 1 to 7” (Benson et al., 1993, p. 12). For this current study, the overall mean of the 38 items was 6.22. Benson et al. assert that spiritual maturity occurs along a continuum. Thus, they developed the FMS with two subscales. A vertical subscale that measures a respondent’s faith concerning love for God, and a horizontal subscale that measures the respondent’s love for neighbor (Benson et al.). The vertical subscale score is determined by the mean score of questions 3, 7, 9, 11, 14, 15, 19, 24, 31, 34, 36, and 38. The overall mean of the vertical subscale for this current study is 6.57. The horizontal subscale score is determined by the mean of questions 1, 6, 8, 13, 16, 18, 21, 22, 28, 29, 33, and 37 (Benson et al.). The mean of the horizontal subscale for this current study was 6.19.

The resulting scores of these questions along the continuum reveal a four-fold typology of faith maturity (Benson, et al., 1993, p. 18). For this current study, the median score for the vertical scale was 6.63, and the median score for the horizontal scale was 6.27. A high score is determined as one that exceeds the median for each scale. Table 4 shows the overall mean and median scores for the vertical subscale, horizontal subscale, and complete FMS.

Table 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>FMS Vertical</th>
<th>FMS Horizontal</th>
<th>FMS Complete</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>741</td>
<td>741</td>
<td>741</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>6.57</td>
<td>6.19</td>
<td>6.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median</td>
<td>6.63</td>
<td>6.27</td>
<td>6.38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An individual who scored low in both the vertical and horizontal dimensions is considered to have an undeveloped faith. A respondent who scored high in both the vertical and horizontal dimensions is considered to have an integrated or mature faith (Benson, et al., 1993).
Figure 2 shows the overall vertical, horizontal, and complete FMS means on the four-fold typology of faith. When viewed as a whole, the mean of the vertical, horizontal, and complete FMS shows that the average respondent reports a mature or highly developed faith.

**Figure 2**

*FMS Means on the Typology of Faith*

Note: This depicts the mean scores of each FMS component: vertical subscale (FMS-V), horizontal subscale (FMS-H), and the overall or complete score (FMS-C).

A correlational analysis was performed between the results of the SASL and the three measures of the FMS to address the final three RQs. Table 5 below displays the Servant Leadership survey scores and the overall FMS mean scores for each church:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Church</th>
<th>SASL</th>
<th>FMS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>168</td>
<td>6.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>168</td>
<td>6.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>168</td>
<td>6.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>168</td>
<td>6.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>168</td>
<td>6.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>168</td>
<td>6.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>168</td>
<td>6.58</td>
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**SASL Scores and FMS Mean Scores by Church**
Normality Testing

Pearson $r$ was initially chosen to perform the data analysis. To address the appropriateness of the use of Pearson $r$, normality testing was performed to test linearity, normal distribution, and homoscedasticity. The Q-Q plots for the variables and related subscales revealed a linear trend line. The Q-Q plots were also examined for homoscedasticity to see if the data was evenly grouped around the best fit line. The FMS data plots demonstrated homoscedasticity, while the SASL data plot did not. Furthermore, an examination of the histograms revealed nonlinear characteristics as the residuals are not normally distributed. Figures 3 through 6 display the histograms for the variables and subscales:

Figure 3

Histogram of SASL Scores

Note: The variable which measures the SASL score (Shapiro-Wilk = .599, $df = 251$, $p < .001$) was statically nonsignificant with respect to the Shapiro-Wilk statistic.
Figure 4

FMS Complete Scores

Note: The variable which measures the FMS Complete score (Shapiro-Wilk = .882, df = 741, p < .001) was statistically nonsignificant with respect to the Shapiro-Wilk statistic.
Figure 5

FMS Vertical Scores

Note: The variable which measures the FMS Vertical score (Shapiro-Wilk = .769, df = 741, p < .001) was statistically nonsignificant with respect to the Shapiro-Wilk statistic.
Note: The variable which measures the FMS Horizontal score (Shapiro-Wilk = .864, df = 741, p < .001) was statistically nonsignificant with respect to the Shapiro-Wilk statistic.

The results of the normality testing revealed that the variables violated assumptions associated with the Pearson $r$ correlation technique. Additionally, homoscedasticity could not be confirmed with the SASL data. Therefore the researcher chose to use the nonparametric Spearman’s rank-order correlation coefficient (Spearman’s rho) which is suitable when both variables “involve rank-ordered data and so are ordinal in nature” (Leedy & Ormrod, 2018, p. 232).

**Correlational Analysis**

Correlational analysis utilizing Spearman’s rho on SPSS version 26 statistical software between the results of the SASL and FMS surveys was performed to address RQs 2-4.
RQ2: What relationship, if any, exists between pastoral servant leadership and congregational members’ love for God as measured by the FMS? Results of the Spearman’s rho correlation suggest that there is a moderate correlation between pastoral servant leadership and congregational members’ love for God as measured by the vertical subscale of the FMS ($r_s = .380, n = 251, p < .001$). Thus the evidence supports the idea that a pastor’s servant leadership characteristics will be related to a congregational member’s spiritual formation with respect to a love for God. In other words, higher pastoral scores on the SASL correlate to higher congregational member scores on the vertical subscale of the FMS.

RQ3: What relationship, if any, exists between pastoral servant leadership and congregational members’ love for their neighbor as measured by the FMS? Results of the Spearman’s rho correlation suggest that there is a moderate correlation between pastoral servant leadership and congregational members’ love for their neighbor as measured by the horizontal subscale of the FMS ($r_s = .348, n = 251, p < .001$). Thus, the evidence supports the idea that a pastor’s servant leadership characteristics will be related to a congregational member’s spiritual formation with respect to a love for their neighbor. In other words, higher pastoral scores on the SASL correlate to higher congregational member scores on the horizontal subscale of the FMS.

RQ4: What relationship, if any, exists between pastoral servant leadership and spiritual formation of congregational members as measured by the FMS? Results of the Spearman’s rho correlation suggest that there is a moderate correlation between pastoral servant leadership and congregational members’ spiritual formation as measured by an overall score of the FMS ($r_s = .351, n = 251, p < .001$). Thus, the evidence supports the idea that a pastor’s servant leadership characteristics will be related to a congregational member’s overall spiritual formation. In other
words, higher pastoral scores on the SASL correlate to higher congregational member overall scores on the FMS.

**Null Hypothesis Testing**

The null hypotheses were tested utilizing SPSS version 26. The findings for each null hypothesis are summarized as follows:

**H₀₁:** There is no statistically significant number of pastors practicing servant leadership within the sample group. A one-sample *t*-test was performed to test the null hypothesis and the results suggest that reported pastoral servant leadership scores on the SASL (*M* = 161.97, *SD* = 8.18) are higher than the population as a whole *t*(250) = 149.06, *p* < .001. Since *p* < .001, the null hypothesis that there is no significant number of pastors practicing servant leadership within the sample group is rejected. The mean score of the sample is significantly higher than the average score of the overall population.

**H₀₂:** There is no statistical correlation between a pastor’s servant leadership behavior and congregational members’ love for God. The null hypothesis was tested using Spearman’s rho correlation and the results suggest that there is a positive correlation between pastoral servant leadership scores on the SASL and congregational members’ love for God as measured by the vertical subscale of the FMS (rₛ = .380, *n* = 251, *p* < .001). Thus the evidence supports the hypothesis that higher pastoral scores on the SASL correlate to higher congregational member scores on the vertical subscale of the FMS. Furthermore, Since *p* < .001, the null hypothesis that there is no statistical correlation between a pastor’s servant leadership behavior and congregational members’ love for God is rejected.

**H₀₃:** There is no statistical correlation between a pastor’s servant leadership behavior and congregational members’ love for their neighbor. The null hypothesis was tested using
Spearman’s rho correlation and the results suggest that there is a positive correlation between pastoral servant leadership scores on the SASL and congregational members’ love for their neighbor as measured by the horizontal subscale of the FMS ($r_s = .348, n = 251, p < .001$). Thus, the evidence supports the hypothesis that higher pastoral scores on the SASL correlate to higher congregational member scores on the horizontal subscale of the FMS. Furthermore, since $p < .001$, the null hypothesis that there is no statistical correlation between a pastor’s servant leadership behavior and congregational members’ love for their neighbor is rejected.

**H04:** There is no statistical correlation between a pastor’s servant leadership behavior and congregational members’ spiritual formation. The null hypothesis was tested using Spearman’s rho correlation and the results suggest that there is a positive correlation between pastoral servant leadership scores on the SASL and congregational members’ spiritual formation as measured by an overall score of the FMS ($r_s = .351, n = 251, p < .001$). Thus, the evidence supports the idea that higher pastoral scores on the SASL correlate to higher congregational member overall scores on the FMS. Furthermore, since $p < .001$, the null hypothesis that there is no statistical correlation between a pastor’s servant leadership behavior and congregational members’ spiritual formation is rejected.

**Evaluation of the Research Design**

The research design used in this study was a quantitative non-exploratory correlational approach, which is used to "describe and measure the degree of association (or relationship) between two or more variables or sets of scores" (Creswell, 2018, p. 50). This study collected quantitative data with regards to pastoral servant leadership behavior and test its relationship with congregational spiritual formation. The primary independent variable was pastoral servant
leadership behavior. The primary dependent variable was the spiritual formation of congregational members.

The Pastors’ style and level of leadership were gathered by way of the SASL questionnaire administered via the Survey Monkey online platform. The SASL is a 24-item self-assessment survey that measures servant leadership behaviors and characteristics (Taylor, 2002).

Congregational members were administered the FMS survey via the Survey Monkey online platform to determine the individual’s faith concerning his love for God (vertical) and love for his neighbor (horizontal) (Benson et al., 1993). The FMS is a 38-question survey that measures spiritual formation in eight core areas that measure the participant’s trust and belief, experience of the fruits of faith, integration of faith and life, seeking spiritual growth, experience and nurture the faith community, holds life-affirming values, advocates social change, and acts and serves (Benson, et al.).

The SASL and FMS surveys were easy to administer and provided comprehensive data. However, various factors may have limited the effectiveness of these instruments. The self-assessment process may have limited the results to the willingness of the participants to perform a candid self-evaluation. Furthermore, the veracity of participant responses may have been limited by concerns of predetermined results or apprehension concerning confidentiality. The collected data from these instruments were analyzed using SPSS statistical software version 26.

The setting for this study included Protestant churches from various denominations throughout the United States as selected from USA Churches online database and Baptist Associations in Arkansas, California, and Hawaii. Participants for this study were 251 pastors from the 650 invited churches who consented to take the SASL, yielding a 38.6% participation rate. 741 congregational members from the 251 participating churches completed the FMS.
The statistical procedure initially chosen for this study was the Pearson $r$ correlation. This statistical procedure is typically used for determining the correlation between two variables having continuous data with a linear relationship. For a positive correlation, both variables increase simultaneously. For a negative correlation, as one variable increases the other decreases (Leedy & Ormrod, 2018). In this current study, the data was collected through the online survey instruments was continuous data. Because the results of the normality testing revealed that the variables violated assumptions associated with the Pearson $r$ correlation technique, the researcher chose to use Spearman’s rho which is suitable when both variables “involve rank-ordered data and so are ordinal in nature” (Leedy & Ormrod, p. 232).

**Conclusion**

Chapter Four presents the results and findings of the data analysis beginning with a review of the compilation protocol and measure, followed by demographic and sample data, analysis and findings of the data, and concludes with an evaluation of the research design. Although Pearson $r$ was initially chosen for data analysis, the researcher ultimately chose Spearman’s rho because the data failed normality testing. The data analysis affirmatively answered all four research questions in that there is a statistically significant relationship between pastoral servant leadership scores on the SASL and congregational spiritual formation as measured by the FMS. The null hypothesis testing resulted in a rejection of all four null hypotheses. The quantitative non-exploratory correlational research design was appropriate to test for a relationship between pastoral servant leadership and congregational spiritual formation. Chapter Five follows with a review of the research purpose and questions, as well as research conclusions, implications, applications, and limitations, and also recommendations for further research.
CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS

Overview

Chapter Four provided a discussion of the results of the correlational analysis on possible relationships between pastoral servant leadership and congregational spiritual growth. Chapter Five presents conclusions drawn from the findings of the data analysis as found in the previous chapter. This will begin with a review of the research purpose and questions followed by a presentation of research conclusions. Next, the implications will be discussed with respect to the existing literature as reviewed in Chapter 2. This will be followed by the applications for the findings and how they can be used to further pastoral servant leadership and congregational spiritual formation. Additionally, limitations faced by this study will be briefly reviewed followed by recommendations for further research.

Research Purpose

The purpose of this correlational study was to determine if a relationship exists between pastoral servant leadership and congregational spiritual formation in Protestant churches within the United States of America.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

**RQ1.** What proportion of pastors within the sample group employ servant leadership as measured by the SASL?

**RQ2.** What relationship, if any, exists between pastoral servant leadership and congregational members’ love for God as measured by the FMS?

**RQ3.** What relationship, if any, exists between pastoral servant leadership and congregational members’ love for their neighbor as measured by the FMS?

**RQ4.** What relationship, if any, exists between pastoral servant leadership and spiritual formation of congregational members as measured by the FMS?
Research Conclusions, Implications, and Applications

There has been an exhaustive amount of literature produced concerning the study of servant leadership as a single focus. Furthermore, there are various studies regarding the spiritual formation of individuals and congregations, but there is little research that shows its relationship with servant leadership (Akerlund, 2016; Johnson, 2017; Varnado, 2018; Yukl, 2013). Due to the overabundance of singularly focused studies, this current research focused on a correlative relationship between pastoral servant leadership and congregational spiritual formation. Therefore, this researcher will provide research conclusions, implications, and applications concentrated on the relationship between pastoral servant leadership and congregational spiritual formation.

Research Conclusions

This research suggests that a significant correlation exists between pastoral servant leadership and congregational spiritual formation. This study revealed that a statistically significant proportion of the pastors scored themselves as possessing strong servant leadership behaviors. Using Taylor’s (2002) method of analyzing the Self Assessment of Servant Leadership (SASL) survey, 56% of the respondents were above the median score.

This research also revealed that the overall congregational respondents’ mean scores on the Faith Maturity Scale (FMS) were in the high ends of both vertical and horizontal scales. Moreover, the total FMS mean score was located in the “Integrated” quadrant (Benson et al., 1993). This suggests that the spiritual formation of the average respondent on the FMS is well-developed.

Spearman’s rho testing of the SASL and overall FMS scores, as well as the FMS vertical and horizontal subscales, indicate the existence of a relationship. Additionally, the Null
Hypothesis Significance Testing produced a rejection of all four null hypotheses. These findings suggest that there is a significant correlation between pastoral servant leadership and congregational spiritual formation.

**Implications**

This study revealed that a statistically significant proportion (56%) of the pastors scored themselves as possessing strong servant leadership behaviors when the data was analyzed using Taylor’s (2002) method. However, in this current study, the overall results of the SASL were heavily weighted towards the higher end of the scale. As a result 220 of the 251 (87.6%) of the pastors scored above the mean SASL score of 161.97. Furthermore, 230 of the 251 (91.6%) of the pastors scored above 151.2 which is in the top 10% of the SASL scale.

When viewed from this perspective, it suggests that an overwhelming majority of the pastors surveyed practice servant leadership. But is this the case? Similar studies using the SASL also noted higher than expected SASL scores (Crabtree, 2014; Taylor, 2002; Valdes, 2009). One weakness of a self-scoring survey is that many respondents may feel more comfortable recording high scores, as self-perception may often be higher than reality (Valdes). For this reason, the measure of pastoral servant leadership should not be confined merely to self-scoring instruments. Perhaps this is the reason many studies concerning servant leadership focus on followership and their perception of the effectiveness of the leader (Irving & Berndt, 2017; Keith, 2017; Lemoine, 2017; Tischler, Giambatista, McKeage, & McCormick, 2016).

This research also revealed that the overall congregational respondents’ mean scores on the Faith Maturity Scale (FMS) were in the high ends of both vertical and horizontal scales. Moreover, the total FMS mean score was located in the “Integrated” quadrant (Benson et al., 1993). This suggests that the spiritual formation of the average respondent on the FMS is well-
developed. Like the SASL, the FMS is a self-scoring instrument and the results could be affected by a self-perception bias leading to higher than expected scores (Valdes, 2009). Spiritual formation is best measured by the production of spiritual fruit as described in Galatians 5:22-23. Living out one’s faith is a way to advance spiritual formation and provides an opportunity for the believer to give an outward demonstration of the inner transformation (Buchanan & Hyde, 2008).

Although the results of the correlational analysis performed between the SASL and FMS scores support the hypothesis that strong pastoral servant leadership has a positive relationship with congregational spiritual formation, exuberance over the findings must be tempered until more research can be performed to validate the results.

The implications of this study begin to bridge the gap that exists between the study of pastoral servant leadership and congregational spiritual formation. Thus far, the impact that servant leadership has had on the spiritual formation of Christians and Christian institutions has shown to be inconclusive (McEachin, 2011; Crabtree, 2014: Anderson, 2015). The relatively scarce amount of literature regarding this relationship drives the need for more research. One single study cannot conclusively prove a direct relationship exists between two variables. However, this current study seems to suggest a relationship between the two exists and therefore may provide an impetus for further exploration.

The difficulty in drawing a more tangible conclusion from this study lies in the fact that only one variable (pastoral servant leadership) was examined in relation to congregational spiritual formation. There are many other direct and indirect variables that could also have an impact on congregational spiritual formation. Despite the lack of a large volume of literature on the subject, this current study shows that a positive relationship exists. Therefore, it is
recommended that pastors consider servant leadership as an effective biblical model, and to seek continuous improvement of servant leadership behaviors as they strive to lead their congregations into spiritual maturity.

Application

This study has shown that pastoral servant leadership is critical to pastors fulfilling the biblically stated purpose of pastoral servant leadership as found in Ephesians 4:12-13, which is the spiritual formation of congregational members. Means (1989) seems to concur when he notes that the key characteristics possessed by biblical servant leaders include “study, prayer, modeling, discipling, preaching, teaching and equipping the saints for ministry” (pp. 53-54). This suggests that pastors who exhibit strong servant leadership behaviors may have a positive impact on the spiritual development of their congregations.

Reymond (2009) describes five divinely-given means by which Christians can grow spiritually: reading and preaching God’s Word, partaking of the sacraments, prayer, assembly of believers, and God’s providence in the daily lives of believers. Pastoral servant leaders are integral in administering and teaching these means that God has provided for the spiritual formation of His people. Although these instruments are means for spiritual formation it does not occur separately from the work of the Holy Spirit in the believer. Paul reminds his readers “for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure” (Philippians 2:13). Pastors preach, teach, administer, and assist the congregants, parishioners cooperate with the Spirit, and the Holy Spirit works in and through all to generate spiritual formation.

A key component of congregational spiritual formation mentioned in Ephesians 4:13 is “equipping the saints for the ministry.” Rather than simply providing instruction, this refers to “equipping, perfecting, or preparing. . . (and) has the idea of fitting or preparing fully or
qualifying for a particular purpose” (Cone, 2009, p. 167). This can also be termed replication as pastors and other Christian leaders are tasked with producing and developing mature Christians who can in turn produce other Christians, and so on. This organic growth of the Body of Christ is the method demonstrated throughout the New Testament (Glasser, 2018). Many churches focus on creating ministries that target a specific demographic (youth, teens, women, men, seniors, etc.) or provide professional levels of entertainment and production through praise bands and similar strategies to meet the needs and desires of their congregations. Although these may be useful and help to increase numbers of attendees, they should not be performed as an alternative to the proven biblical method of growth. Pastoral servant leaders must make congregational spiritual formation a priority.

Christians who are growing and maturing should be able and willing to take on more responsibilities with regard to spiritual service in the church and community, demonstrating a life dedicated to Christ, and sharing the gospel with others. An important element of servant leadership concerns empowerment (van Dierendonck and Nuijten, 2011). Pastors who empower members of the congregation to handle more responsibility provide opportunities for additional growth from an experiential standpoint. Furthermore, Cone (2009) affirms that in addition to playing an important role in spiritual formation, the Holy Spirit gifts and enables the individual saints to perform the activities of the church. When each member of the Body of Christ is mature and working properly, collectively they make “the body grow so that it builds itself up in love” (Ephesians 4:16).

The findings of this study add to the existing research supporting the viability and usefulness of servant leadership and point to the need for pastoral servant leadership development. Anderson (2015) holds that there is a strong connection between the gospel and the
development of servant leaders. Paul’s Epistle to the Philippians offers a biblically sound servant leadership model that encompasses both internal and external precepts of being and doing (Myung, 2014). The effects of servant leadership reach far beyond the senior pastor of a local congregation. “Leadership training is a means for preparing and developing future elders and deacons . . . (and) as a means to prepare faithful men and women for other areas of ministry in the church” (Cone, 2009, pp. 172-173).

This research revealed that strong pastoral servant leadership was a significant positive predictor of increased congregational spiritual formation. Seminaries should include servant leadership training and for pastors, future pastors, and others in church leadership positions. Keith (2017) holds that developing others is an essential element of servant leadership. Therefore, making servant leadership a part of the required curriculum will have a lasting positive impact on future congregational spiritual formation. This falls in line with Greenleaf’s top-down design to propagate servant leadership through what he termed his hierarchy of institutions. At the top of this hierarchy was “seminaries and foundations, the middle composed of churches and universities, and the bottom was made up of the operating institutions” (Anderson, 2008, p. 14).

Lemoine (2017) affirms that servant leaders place the follower’s well being above their own and will focus on their development. When viewed through the lens of this study, congregations who desire spiritual formation should want pastors who are servant leaders. Churches who are searching for a new pastor ought to give preference to candidates who have proven experience with servant leadership or those who have had classes or training in this discipline. Furthermore, congregations who are satisfied with their current pastor should provide funding and avenues for him or her to receive servant leadership training or classes to strengthen
these qualities which will, in turn, enhance congregational spiritual formation. Servant leadership honors God through developing congregations who can promulgate the expansion of the gospel as commanded by Christ in Matthew 26:19-20. Anderson (2008) asserts, “if an organization is God-honoring in every aspect of its existence, it can count on performance that goes beyond that made possible by mere men” (p.23).

In terms of leadership development, there is no better example of a servant leader than that of Jesus Christ. Bloom (2017) uses scriptural support in his claim to the five marks of a servant leader. The first is that the leader continually seeks the glory of God rather than glory for themself. The second is that the servant leader sacrifices to obtain happiness for those he or she serves. Third, the leader will hold the message of the gospel to a higher place than his or her wants, needs, rights, or desires. Fourth, a servant leader is humble and avoids personal recognition. Finally, he or she understands that they must decrease so Christ and His message may increase (Bloom).

Genuine servant leadership must be centered around a commitment to the authority of Scripture in the life of the leader (Bredfeldt, 2006). This study will add to the existing literature and provide further incentive for pastoral training and development, which in turn will facilitate congregational spiritual formation.

**Research Limitations**

A single research study cannot cover every possible circumstance due to certain limitations. The research study and its findings were limited to Protestant churches located in the United States of America. Churches outside this country were excluded from data collection. Non-Protestant groups and those belonging to other religions were excluded from data
collection. Similarly, this study included various Protestant denominations, which limited a denominationally specific focus.

This study was also limited by the use of only one measure of servant leadership, the SASL. As an instrument for this particular study, the SASL itself may be limited by its design as it does not measure solely biblical servant leadership. Although it does measure elements of biblical servant leadership, it also measures participative management elements that are not part of biblical servant leadership as defined by Means (1989).

Similarly, the measure of spiritual formation was limited to the use of the FMS. No other instruments or methods were utilized to collect data for these areas. Furthermore, the SASL and FMS surveys were limited to the readiness of the participants to perform an honest self-assessment. Participant perceptions of predetermined outcomes and concern for lack of confidentiality may also have limited the veracity of their responses and limited the effectiveness of these data collection instruments.

Another limitation of this study was the lack of random sampling. Systematic sampling was the method chosen for the initial population derived from the USA Churches database, as it may “have precision-equivalent random sampling” (Creswell, 2018, p. 257). However, an inadequate initial return rate drove an IRB approved change in protocol to expand the population. Therefore, in an attempt to achieve a higher return rate, a convenience sampling strategy was applied for the additional population consisting of Baptist Association churches in Arkansas, California, and Hawaii.

A final limitation of this study is due to the nature of the correlational approach, which was used to test for possible relationships rather than prove causation. Seeking to prove causation with a quantitative study is difficult as there are often confounding variables in
addition to the variables being studied unless a true experiment is used and controlling variables are applied (Creswell, 2018). This researcher did not use controlling variables as this study did not seek to prove causation. The results of an approach that does not seek to determine causation have limited application as there may be other variables that affect the dependent variable. For example, in this current study pastoral servant leadership may not be the only variable that has a positive impact on the FMS. Children who were raised in a Christian home where those values were taught and modeled may possess a higher level of spiritual maturity without regard for the type of leadership exercised by their current pastor. Likewise, the spiritual maturity of students who attend a Christian university may be more positively affected by the classes, classmates, and overall environment than by that of the pastor of their church.

Further Research

The narrow focus of any research project tends to lead to more questions than it answers. Therefore in an effort to encourage continued study in this area, the following recommendations for further research are made:

The first recommendation is to modify the current study and conduct it with a denominationally specific focus. The current study with its multi-denominational approach could not account for the various nuances associated with the different organizational structures. Many churches perform most of their instruction at Sunday School and a mid-week Bible study. But many offer additional opportunities for instruction. For example, many Baptist churches utilize the Baptist Training Union that consists of detailed, age-graded educational programs that meet two to four times each month. Lutheran churches hold weekly confirmation classes for teens and others wishing to become full members of the local church. Many other churches offer new believers classes, new member classes, and diverse small group meetings at various times
throughout the week to help develop and grow the spiritual formation of their congregants. A study with a denominationally specific focus could aid in assessing the effectiveness of these curriculums as well as the pastor’s leadership and administration of these programs.

The second recommendation of modification is conducting the current study using different instruments to test each group. In place of the SASL, the Leadership Practices Inventory and the Multifactor Leadership Questionaire are two of many other proven instruments used to measure servant leadership behaviors. Instead of the FMS, instruments such as the Furnishing the Soul Inventory and the Spiritual Assessment Inventory are two of several valid instruments used to measure spiritual formation. Correlational research of the data collected from these instruments may provide further validation and insight into the relationship between pastoral servant leadership and congregational spiritual formation.

The third recommendation is to conduct a mixed-method study that “combines or integrates both qualitative and quantitative forms of research” (Creswell, 2018, p. 278). In addition to collecting quantitative data from surveys, qualitative data could be obtained through interviews with open-ended questions and observations to collect additional data. This may provide a more holistic view of a pastor’s servant leadership and its impact on congregational spiritual formation. As previously discussed, self-scoring instruments such as the SASL and FMS have an inherent weakness in terms of a self-perception bias. Several studies concerning servant leadership focus on followership and their perception of the effectiveness of the leader (Irving & Berndt, 2017; Keith, 2017; Lemoine, 2017; Tischler, Giambatista, McKeage, & McCormick, 2016). Future studies in this area might consider using an instrument that examines the parishioners’ perspective of their pastor’s servant leadership. In a similar manner, congregational spiritual formation might be better gauged by surveying the pastor’s assessment
of his or her congregation’s spiritual formation. A mixed-method study may be better suited for this type of assessment as interviews with open-ended questions will allow for discussion so pastors and parishioners can provide informed and comprehensive answers.

The fourth and final recommendation is to modify this study and perform research using a causal-comparative approach with two groups of pastors (servant and nonservant leaders) and their respective congregations. Each groups’ congregational FMS scores could be analyzed and compared to test if there are any significant differences between the servant and nonservant pastor-lead groups.

**Summary**

This study tested the relationship between pastoral servant leadership and congregational spiritual formation. Effective church leadership is critical in the spiritual formation of the members, growth of the church, and the effectiveness of the church in reaching the local community. In Ephesians 4:12-13 the Apostle Paul sets forth the purpose for pastoral servant leadership as being congregational spiritual formation.

Findings from this study suggest that pastors who exercise strong servant leadership behaviors may have a positive influence on congregational spiritual formation. This research can present pastors with a biblical model that could aid in discipling and equipping congregational members to grow into spiritual maturity. Although this study only encapsulates a small sampling of the hundreds of thousands of churches in the United States, the findings confirm this researcher’s hypothesis that a significant relationship exists between pastoral servant leadership and congregational spiritual formation.

The findings of this research begin to bridge the gap between the study of servant leadership and spiritual formation. This is significant because very little research has been
performed concerning the relationship between the two. Moreover, these findings can add to the body of knowledge of servant leadership and spiritual formation theories with the overall goal of enhancing church leadership and congregational spiritual formation. Since this study revealed that significant relationships exist, future work should be targeted at training Christian leaders in servant leadership theory and application as developed by Greenleaf (2008) and Blanchard and Hodges (2003).

The findings of this study underscore the importance of the advancement of pastoral servant leadership. Seminaries, churches, and pastors can use this knowledge to further cultivate behaviors associated with pastoral servant leadership, which could lead to increased congregational spiritual formation. Further research could lead to improvements in pastoral training with a strategy to better equip pastors to enhance congregational spiritual growth through servant leadership.
REFERENCES


Brother Lawrence of the Resurrection. (1906). *The practice of the presence of God*. H. R. Allenson, LLC.


Sheldon, C. M. (1899). In his steps. Advance Publishing Co.


APPENDIX A: IRB APPROVAL

September 20, 2019

Rich Sironen
IRB Exemption 3952.092019: The Relationship between Pastoral Servant Leadership and Congregational Spiritual Formation in Small U.S. Churches

Dear Rich Sironen,

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds your study to be exempt from further IRB review. This means you may begin your research with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your approved application, and no further IRB oversight is required.

Your study falls under exemption category 46.101(b)(2), which identifies specific situations in which human participants research is exempt from the policy set forth in 45 CFR 46.101(b):

(2) Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording) if...the following criteria is met:

(iii) The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects can readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects, and an IRB conducts a limited IRB review to make the determination required by §46.111(a)(7).

Please note that this exemption only applies to your current research application, and any changes to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty IRB for verification of continued exemption status. You may report these changes by submitting a change in protocol form or a new application to the IRB and referencing the above IRB Exemption number.

If you have any questions about this exemption or need assistance in determining whether possible changes to your protocol would change your exemption status, please email us at...

Sincerely,

[Name]

G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP
Administrative Chair of Institutional Research
Research Ethics Office

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APPENDIX B: SASL PERMISSION REQUEST/APPROVAL

Sironen, Rich J
FWD: Permission to use SASL
To: Sironen, Rich J

----- Forwarded InMail Message from LinkedIn -----

Forwarded from Rich Sironen: [redacted]

Permission to use SASL

Greetings!

My name is Rich J. Sironen and I am an EdD student at Liberty University School of Divinity working on my dissertation in the area of Christian Ministry Leadership. My study is an investigation of the relationship between pastoral servant leadership and congregational spiritual formation in the context of the local church in the United States.

I respectfully request permission to use the Self Assessment of Servant Leadership (SASL) survey instrument in its entirety to measure the servant leadership component of the study. The primary source concerning the SASL is: Taylor, T. A. (2002). Examination of leadership practices of principles identified as servant leaders. (Doctoral dissertation). Available from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database. (UMI No. 3062221).

Thank you for your consideration.

Rich J. Sironen

Tim Taylor
Message accepted: RE: Permission to use SASL
To: Rich Sironen,
Reply-To: Tim Taylor

Linkedin

InMail: Message accepted

Congrats, you received a reply to your InMail! We're crediting one InMail back to your account.

Tim Taylor has accepted your request.
Title: RE: Permission to use SASL

Rich,
Yes, you are welcome to use it.
Good luck with your research.

Tim Taylor

View Message
APPENDIX C: FMS PERMISSION REQUEST/APPROVAL

From: Lydia Thompson
Subject: Re: Faith Maturity Scale Survey Request
Date: July 16, 2019 at 3:31 PM
To: Sironen, Rich J

Hello Rich,

Permission is granted for you to use the Faith Maturity Scale.

Best,

On Tue, Jul 16, 2019 at 1:07 PM Sironen, Rich J wrote:
Greetings!

My name is Rich J. Sironen and I am an EdD student at Liberty University School of Divinity working on my dissertation in the area of Christian Ministry Leadership. My study is an investigation of the relationship between pastoral servant leadership and congregational spiritual formation in the context of the local church in the United States.

I respectfully request permission to use the Faith Maturity Scale (FMS) survey instrument in its entirety to measure the spiritual formation component of the study. The primary source concerning the FMS is:


Thank you for your consideration.

Rich J. Sironen

---

Lydia Thompson
Survey & Data Specialist
Search Institute • 3001 Broadway Street NE, Suite 310 • Minneapolis, MN 55413
Direct Phone: www.search-institute.org

Stay up to date on research and news from Search Institute!

faith-maturity-scale.pdf  Benson, Donahue...ion.pdf
APPENDIX D: PASTORAL RECRUTIMENT EMAIL

Dear Pastor:

As a doctoral student in the School of Divinity at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a doctoral degree. The purpose of my research is to examine the relationship between pastoral servant leadership and congregational spiritual formation, and I am writing to invite you and your church to participate in my research study.

If you are 18 years of age or older, are currently a pastor with at least one-year experience as pastor at your current church, and are willing to participate, you will be asked to complete a survey about your servant leadership characteristics. It should take approximately 10 minutes for you to complete the survey. Your name and/or other identifying information will be collected as part of your participation, but this information will remain confidential.

If you desire that you and your church participate in this research, please take the following steps no later than March 21, 2020:

1. To participate, click on the link provided (or copy and paste into your browser) and complete the survey: https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/XQ36F2T

   A consent document is provided as the first page you will see after you click on the survey link. The consent document contains additional information about my research. Please electronically sign the document by typing in your name and date in the box at the end of the consent information to indicate that you have read the consent information and would like to take part in the survey.

2. After the signing the consent form you will be asked to respond to some screening questions and enter your Church Identification Code. Your Church Identification Code is: XXX

3. Forward the attached “Congregational Recruitment” email to all congregants as a request to participate in a survey designed for their input in the research. Participants will be asked to click on the link provided and complete the survey. Participants will be presented with informed consent information prior to participating. Taking part in this study is completely voluntary, and participants are welcome to discontinue participation at any time.

If you have any questions/concerns please feel free to contact me at [REMOVED] or [REMOVED].

Sincerely,

Rich Sironen
Doctoral Candidate
Liberty University School of Divinity
APPENDIX E: PASTORAL CONSENT FORM

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PASTORAL SERVANT LEADERSHIP AND CONGREGATIONAL SPIRITUAL FORMATION U. S. CHURCHES

Rich Sironen
Liberty University
School of Divinity

You are invited to be in a research study of pastoral servant leadership and its relationship with congregational spiritual formation. You were selected as a possible participant because you are at least 18 years old and have been a pastor at your current church for at least one year. Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

Rich Sironen, a doctoral candidate in the School of Divinity at the Liberty University, is conducting the study.

Background Information: The purpose of this study is to explore the relationship between pastoral servant leadership and congregational spiritual formation. Pastors will complete the Self-Assessment of Servant Leadership survey, which is a tool that measures a level of servant leadership. Congregational members will complete the Faith Maturity Scale survey, which is a tool that measures parishioners spiritual formation concerning their love for God and love for their neighbor. This study will explore possible relationships between the two.

Procedures: If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to complete the following:

1. Complete a short, online self-assessment survey that will take about 10 minutes to complete. The survey will ask you to assess some of your leadership characteristics.

Risks: The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

Benefits: Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study. Benefits to society include providing information that could lead to church pastors improving their leadership abilities as they relate to the spiritual formation of congregational members.

Compensation: Participants will not be compensated for participating in this study.

Confidentiality: The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report I might publish, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records. I may share the data I collect from you for use in future research studies or with other researchers; if I share the data that I collect about you, I will remove any information that could identify you, if applicable, before I share the data.

- The researcher will receive all the data from the survey site with only a code designating the church of the respondents. Pastor participants will be assigned a code to conceal their identity.
• Data will be stored on a password-locked computer and may be used in future presentations. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted.

**Voluntary Nature of the Study:** Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University or your current church. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

**How to Withdraw from the Study:** If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in the study.

**Contacts and Questions:** The researcher conducting this study is Rich Sironen. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you are encouraged to contact him at [contact information removed]. You may also contact the faculty chair for this research, Dr. Brian Pinzer at [contact information removed].

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, you are encouraged to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd, Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu.

*Please notify the researcher if you would like a copy of this information for your records.*

**Statement of Consent:** I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in this study.

Please indicate consent with electronic signature by typing your name and date in textbox below.

Name:___________________________________ Date:________________________________
Dear Church Member:

As a doctoral student in the School of Divinity at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a doctoral degree. The purpose of my research is to examine the relationship between pastoral servant leadership and congregational spiritual formation, and I am writing to invite you to participate in my study.

If you are 18 years of age or older, have been a member of your current church for at least one year, and are willing to participate, you will be asked to complete a survey about your spiritual habits. It should take approximately 10 minutes for you to complete the survey. Your participation will be completely anonymous, and no personal, identifying information will be collected.

To participate, click on the link provided (or copy and paste into your browser) and complete the survey **not later than March 21, 2020**: https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/D3T3V8D

A consent document is provided as the first page you will see after you click on the survey link. The consent document contains additional information about my research, but you do not need to sign and return it. Please click on the survey link at the end of the consent information to indicate that you have read the consent information and would like to take part in the survey.

During the survey, you will be asked to enter your Church Identification Code. Your Church Identification Code is: XXX

If you have any questions/concerns please feel free to contact me at [redacted] or [redacted].

Sincerely,

Rich Sironen
Doctoral Candidate
Liberty University School of Divinity
APPENDIX G: CONGREGATIONAL CONSENT FORM

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PASTORAL SERVANT LEADERSHIP AND CONGREGATIONAL SPIRITUAL FORMATION IN U. S. CHURCHES

Rich Sironen
Liberty University
School of Divinity

You are invited to be in a research study of pastoral servant leadership and its relationship with congregational spiritual formation. You were selected as a possible participant because you are at least 18 years old and have been a member of your current church for at least one year. Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

Rich Sironen, a doctoral candidate in the School of Divinity at the Liberty University, is conducting the study.

Background Information: The purpose of this study is to explore the relationship between pastoral servant leadership and congregational spiritual formation. Pastors will complete the Self-Assessment of Servant Leadership survey, which is a tool that measures a level of servant leadership. Congregational members will complete the Faith Maturity Scale survey, which is a tool that measures parishioners spiritual formation concerning their love for God and love for their neighbor. This study will explore possible relationships between the two.

Procedures: If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to complete the following:
   1. Complete a short, online self-assessment survey that will take about 10 minutes to complete. The survey will ask you to assess some of your spiritual habits.

Risks: The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

Benefits: Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study. Benefits to society include providing information that could lead to church pastors improving their leadership abilities as they relate to the spiritual formation of congregational members.

Compensation: Participants will not be compensated for participating in this study.

Confidentiality: The records of this study will be kept private. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records. Responses will be anonymous and the researcher will receive all the data from the survey site with only a code designating the church of the respondents. Data will be stored on a password-locked computer and may be used in future presentations. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted.
**Voluntary Nature of the Study:** Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University or your current church. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time, prior to submitting the survey, without affecting those relationships.

**How to Withdraw from the Study:** If you choose to withdraw from the study, please exit the survey and close your internet browser. Your responses will not be recorded or included in the study.

**Contacts and Questions:** The researcher conducting this study is Rich Sironen. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact him at [302-399-4049](tel:302-399-4049) or [rjsironen@liberty.edu](mailto:rjsironen@liberty.edu). You may also contact the faculty chair for this research, Dr. Brian Pinzer at [bpinzer@liberty.edu](mailto:bpinzer@liberty.edu).

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd, Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at [irb@liberty.edu](mailto:irb@liberty.edu).

**Please notify the researcher if you would like a copy of this information for your records.**

**Statement of Consent:** I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in this study.

By clicking on the button below you affirm:

1. You are at least 18 years of age or older.
2. You have been a member of your current church for at least one year
3. You agree with the “Statement of Consent” (above).
Good Morning Rich,

This email is to inform you that your request to “add 300 churches from several Baptist Associations within Arkansas, California, and Hawaii to the already approved population” and expand the focus of your study “to include all size churches” has been approved. Thank you for submitting your revised study documents for our review and documentation. Your revised, stamped consent forms are attached.

Thank you for complying with the IRB’s requirements for making changes to your approved study. Please do not hesitate to contact us with any questions.

We wish you well as you continue with your research.

Best,

G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP
Administrative Chair of Institutional Research
Research Ethics Office

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